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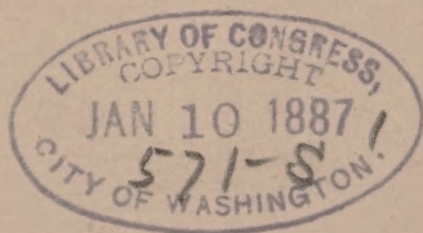
A

NEW ENGLAND IDYL

BY

BELLE C. GREENE

AUTHOR OF "A NEW ENGLAND CONSCIENCE"



BOSTON

D. LOTHROP AND COMPANY

FRANKLIN AND HAWLEY STREETS

(1886)

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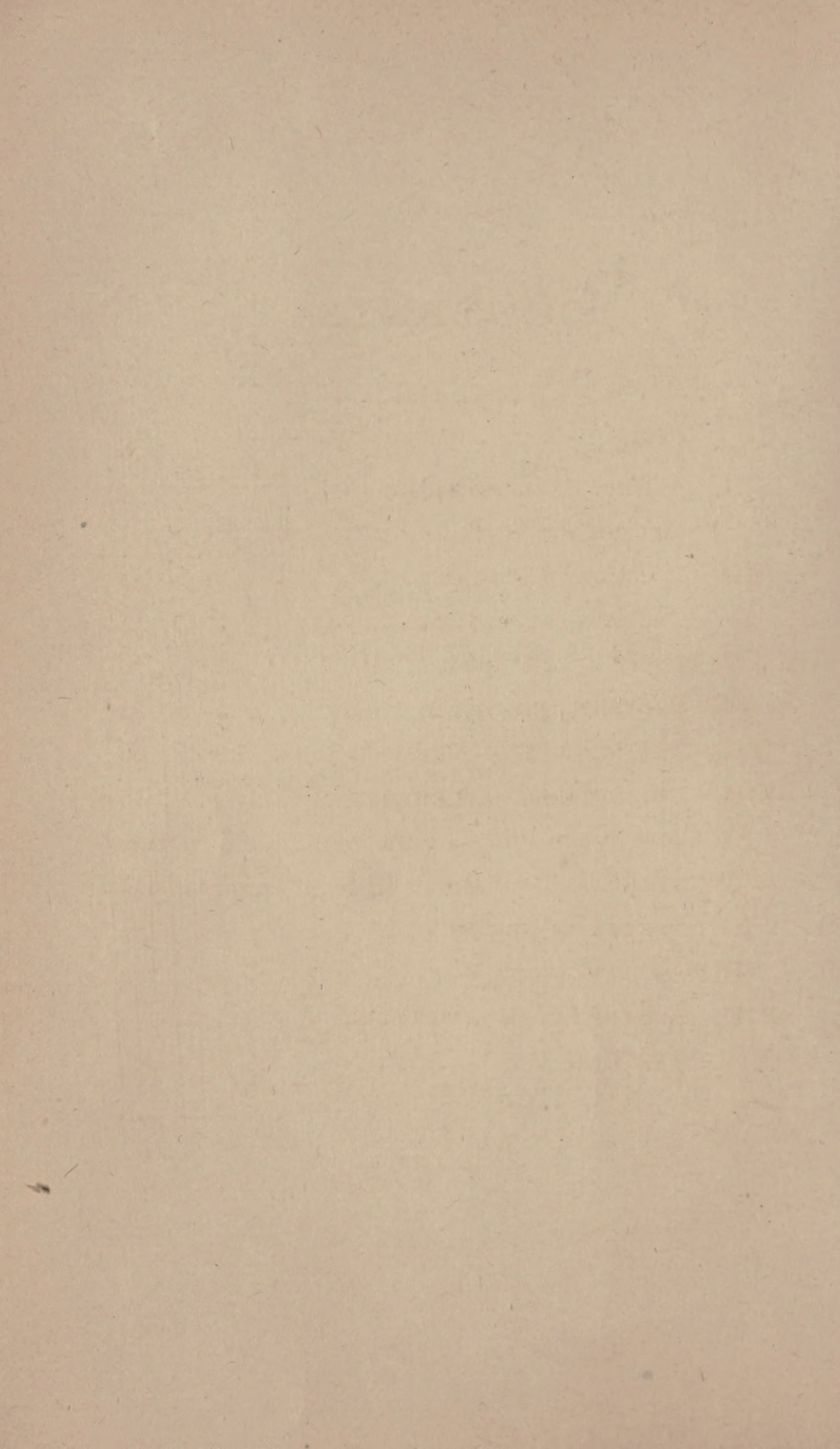
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ELECTROTYPED
BY C. J. PETERS AND SON, BOSTON.

To My Friend,
MRS. NELLIE M. HUSSEY,

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

THE AUTHOR.



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A NEW ENGLAND IDYL.

CHAPTER I.

A NEW ENGLAND HOME.

FAR away, up among the green hills of one of our northern New England states, the little town of Sherburn sleeps in primitive beauty and stillness; and its simple inhabitants work out their peaceful lives, only hearing afar off, as it were, the din and confusion of the great world beyond. "Sherburn Holler," as it is called thereabouts, is a narrow strip of land, shut in on both sides by high hills. In the valley lie the meadows, with the little crooked

brooks winding through, and on the hills are the pasture lands, where feed the flocks. There, also, the timber grows; and when a Sherburn man would build him a house, he digs a trench down the mountain side, fells the big pines, and slides them to the plains below, where they are taken to mill to be sawed into boards.

There are many noisy cataracts among the mountains, which come tumbling down from rocky heights, and, in spring-time especially, they seem to fill the whole world with their roar. It is a solemn place — solemn in sight and sound — and nature and nature's God seem to reign over all in silent majesty.

Nestling warmly among the meadows is the little farm known to Sherburn folks as the "Widder Ruggles farm." The

widow is dead, but the family still occupy the place, and it retains the old name.

The house is poor, and small, and old, but there is a comfortable, home-like look about it that recommends it at once to the stranger.

The family consists of five persons: Aunt Nancy, a much loved relative on the mother's side; Hester, the eldest daughter; Rosanna—or Rosy, as she is more commonly called; and two boys, John and Jerry.

Jerry, the youngest, a bright, active little fellow of eight years, may be seen now, as our story opens, driving the cows down the steep side-hill back of the house. He whistles a merry tune as he goes running and leaping along, or stops perhaps to shy a stone at a venturesome squirrel. A sturdy fellow is he, and his bare brown

feet and legs are seemingly proof against the thistles and stubble in the way.

Arrived at the barnyard, he hastily let down the bars, turned in the cows, and ran into the house.

“Now, Jerry,” protested a kind old voice, as the boy entered, “*do* go and wipe your feet! I’ve just got this floor mopped, and I wish you *wouldn’t* come trackin’ it all over, the fust thing!”

“Oh, Aunt Nancy! I didn’t mean to — sure pop!” cried Jerry, retreating pell-mell to the shed door, where he made a great show of scraping and cleaning his feet on the mat. “Ain’t supper most ready? I’m hungry as a bear! Where’s Hester?”

“I’m here,” said a sweet voice from an inner room. When Jerry opened the door Hester was standing by the one small window, looping back the clean white

curtains, which she had just finished putting up.

Jerry looked round the room with delight. "Oh, Hester! ain't it nice?" he said. "I guess Rosy 'll like it, don't you?"

"Yes, dear, I think she will," answered his sister with a satisfied smile, which Aunt Nancy, entering at that moment, seemed to reflect on her own good-natured face.

"I must say, Hester," with her head on one side, and shutting up one eye, the better to get the effect, "I must say them curt'ins is complete! And to think that they ain't nothin' in the world but cotton cloth with a strip o' turkey red for trimmin', nuther! It does beat all! But," she added, "I miss them picters of the presidents; *I* shouldn't 'a' took 'em down. They looked so kinder *orderly*, somehow,

all hangin' in a row. Ten of 'em, wa'n't there?"

"Yes," said Jerry, "and the 'Death-bed of Washington' made eleven. Rosy 'll be glad they're gone. She always hated 'em; said they gave her the nightmare."

"They were not very cheerful pictures, certainly," said Hester. "Now this pretty landscape is only a colored print, and those two groups of figures I cut out of a magazine; but they are pleasant to look at, and good of their kind, at least."

"Everybody to his taste. I s'pose they 're well enough," allowed Aunt Nancy. "But come, ain't it 'bout time ter set the table? The stage 'll be along pretty soon."

Hester gave one good look at the room before going out. There were braided mats upon the floor; a comfortably cushioned rocking-chair stood before the

hearth; there was a little table with a few books on it, and a bright worsted lamp-mat. A great white bed stood imposingly in one corner, and the new curtains added a bright, cheerful look to the whole.

“Yes, Rosy will like it,” murmured Hester, giving the bed a parting pat. Then she went out and shut the door.

Jerry had suddenly disappeared, but before they had finished laying the supper-table he came rushing in, with his hands full of golden-rod and asters.

“Don’t you know how Rosy likes these?” he cried, eagerly. “She always used to have ’em in the house as long as they lasted. Put ’em in the blue vase, won’t you?”

“Why, yes, indeed; how nice!” said Hester. “I am so glad you thought of them, Jerry.” Then they filled the big

blue glass vase and set it on the mantel, and felt as if all was complete.

The supper-table was laid with extra care that night. As Aunt Nancy remarked, "If the governor had been comin' ter tea, they could'nt 'a' made a bigger spread." All the family treasures in the way of china were brought out. The remains of the "sprig-leaved" tea-set, handed down for three generations, the George Washington sugar-bowl — a marvel of quaint beauty — and, last and most conspicuous of all, was the silver spoon-holder, sent all the way from Boston by the summer boarder. "And," to quote Aunt Nancy, "the best on't was, it wa'n't all show and dishes, nuther, like some tables she had seen! There was plenty o' vittles, and them that was good and hearty tew." A beautiful great blue platter containing

the "cold b'iled dish" occupied the centre of the table, its deep coloring brought out in charming contrast with the gold of the carrots, the bright red of the beets, and the creamy white of the parsnips and turnips. Then, there was flour bread, and butter, and "plum sass," all of Aunt Nancy's best make, "and good enough for anybody, *if I did make 'em!*" so she said, as she stood by the table, taking a final survey.

Just then there came a loud "hooray!" from Jerry, who had been stationed at the window to watch for the stage. "Here they come!" he shouted, making a precipitous dive for the door, followed more decorously by Aunt Nancy and Hester, as the old stage came lumbering slowly up the road, and finally stopped in front of the house.

A young man, perhaps sixteen years of age, sprang out, and assisted a girl, a year or two older, to alight. She flew to Hester's arms, turning for one instant to give Aunt Nancy and little Jerry a hasty hug and kiss.

“Oh, Hetty, Hetty! I am so glad to see you — so glad!” She kissed her again and again, and hung upon her, repeating, “I am so glad, so glad!” Looking into her lovely, radiant face, no one could for a moment doubt her happiness. They led her into the house, the young man, with Jerry clinging to his hand, following. This young man was brother John, “the head of the family,” as his sisters sometimes teasingly called him; and, young as he was, that dignity did seem to sit already upon his grave and handsome face.

Meanwhile, Aunt Nancy and Hester

were helping Rosy to take off her things as expeditiously as her spasmodic huggings and kissings would allow.

“There, there, Rosy! you dew act like a crazy creatur’,” said Aunt Nancy, mildly disapproving. “Do carm down now, and come to supper; it’s all ready and waitin’.”

“I will, I will, you dear old ‘Mamsey!’” said Rosy, giving her the old familiar pet name she had used from a child, “and, for my part, I am hungry as a bear!”

But first she ran to the little looking-glass, and smoothed her golden hair and her plumage generally, in the charming way that young girls have.

Jerry watched her movements in open-mouthed admiration, and, going up to her, timidly took hold of her dress.

“Rosy,” he whispered, “I want to kiss you — *you are so awful pretty!*”

They all laughed, and Rosy caught him up and smothered him with kisses.

“You darling little rogue!” she cried, “you shall think your sister’s pretty if you want to. You shall be my best beau!” And, diving down into her pocket, she produced a paper of candy and a shining jack-knife, the reception of which rendered Jerry speechless for some time.

That was a happy supper. But Rosy often forgot to eat, in feasting her eyes on the dear ones about her, and they could not look their fill into the happy face of their darling, with them again at last.

“You seem to have got up from your fever pretty well,” remarked Aunt Nancy, considering her niece’s blooming face attentively.

“Oh, yes; I grew strong right away after I got John’s letter saying he was

coming to fetch me home. But oh, I *was* sick, and *so* miserable! I can't tell you" — with a gesture of disgust — "how I hated the mill and the city!"

"But you wa'n't sick at fust — that is, your *health* was good enough for a while?"

"Yes, for a few weeks; but I soon began to feel tired all the time. I was never rested, not even in the morning."

"Pity you didn't think to steep some chamomile blows, and take 'em," said Aunt Nancy, practically. "Nothin' like chamomile for quietin' the narves."

Rosy smiled faintly. "Everything was so horrible!" she continued. "The noise of the mill — the eternal clash, clash of the looms, nearly drove me wild! and the smell of the oil and the greasy machinery sickened and stifled me — even the air in

the streets. Oh, how I longed for a breath from off these hills!”

“Poor child! you was homesick, wa’n’t ye?” remarked Aunt Nancy, sympathetically, helping her to more of the “plum sass.”

Hester clasped Rosy’s hand under the table for an instant, and John’s grave face grew graver.

“As I said, I did not sleep well, and often woke before light. To amuse myself, I would try to imagine I was at home — that I could hear the morning concert of the birds, and all the sounds I loved so well. I would try to imagine that you, Hester, were beside me in our own white bed, and perhaps for one moment I would be almost happy. Then that hateful bell would clang, clang, and I would have to drag myself out to another day’s misery!”

"You *was* dretful homesick, sure enough," repeated Aunt Nancy, wiping her eyes.

"Homesick?" said Rosy, with a little shudder. "I should think I *was*! All the money in the world would not have kept me there a whole year, if it hadn't been for helping the family. But now I shall be just about as miserable, if I can't get something to do, right away. I must earn money, somehow," and a sudden shadow settled down upon her bright face.

"Let us not think about anything unpleasant to-night, dear," said Hester. "Things will all come right."

"*I* propose to support this family myself in future," said John, pompously. "Give yourselves no uneasiness, girls. Think of the big job of chopping I have got for the winter!"

“But I thought you were going to school — how about the lessons and the reading?” asked Rosy.

“Oh, time enough for them in the long evenings,” said John, as he rose and lit his lantern to go to the barn.

“Dear old John,” said Rosy, regretfully; “he ought to have a better chance.”

CHAPTER II.

HESTER AND ROSY.

IN their own room, that night, the two sisters had a good long chat after the manner of girls. But first, Rosy must express her delight at being once more in the dear old room.

She praised the new curtains and pictures, went into raptures over Jerry's flowers, handled the books and familiar ornaments scattered about, with loving recognition, and finally stood still before the great white bed and laughed.

"An imposing structure, is it not?" she said, turning to Hester. "I haven't seen a feather bed since I went away.

I wonder if I have forgotten what it is like," and with one hand on the foot-board, she gave a light spring and landed in the middle of the bed, the feathers rising in downy billows about her. Finding herself very comfortable, she concluded to sit there and take down her hair for the night, which she proceeded to do.

Rosy's hair was something wonderful; golden, wavy, and abundant, and, as she sat there on the great white bed, with its golden sheen about her, she seemed to Hester like a veritable goddess of the sun, on a throne of snow.

"Hester," said Rosy at length, taking a critical survey of the room, "isn't it odd that though we are so poor, we hardly realize it here? I mean in the matter of furnishing, for instance. In

the country, even homely, common things are enjoyable, and seem nice enough. Is it because nobody has anything very elegant? I saw enough of the way rich people live in the city, to make me feel sure that I should be wretched to live there, unless I were rich. The contrast between the rich and poor is so cruel! It is the worst as regards dress. Nothing could be more pitiful than to see the attempts the poor make to imitate the rich in their dress."

"Yes, I suppose so. But I'm sure, Rosy, *you* don't need to care much for dress; you do not need it," said Hester, with fond pride in her sister's beauty.

"Oh, but I did care a great deal! I used to see our agent's daughter. She had the same hair and complexion as

my own, though she was not pretty at all — no, not even *pretty*” — with keen satisfaction, “but she wore such beautiful, becoming dresses! Violet, a shade of violet or heliotrope, she wore oftenest, in satin or velvet; and I used to wish I could see myself in those dresses. I knew it was foolish, but I couldn’t help it. And she often rode past our boarding-house in a grand carriage dressed so, like a queen! and when I thought of the difference in our lives, it made me wretched! why should she fare so much better than I? I tell you it don’t seem right,” said Rosy, bitterly. “I was not utterly selfish either,” she added, “I felt for all the poor girls. I pitied them, as I did myself. I tell you poverty in the city is a terrible thing, especially to those who are educated

above their station. Of course ignorance and coarseness go along more comfortably with poverty. I wish, sometimes, that I had no ambition; that we had not, as a family. We should be more content. I wish we had not studied and read more than our neighbors, and, above all, that we had never had those rich city boarders, to come here and fill our heads full of longings to be and do like them!"

Hester's gentle heart was greatly pained to find Rosy had come back so different from the light-hearted girl she went away.

"I suspect," she said gently, "that if we could look into the hearts and lives of these people you envy, we should find that they are no happier than we ourselves. Happiness is more equally

distributed than we think. Certainly, all the rich people we know have their troubles — there is Miss Arbuckle, now.”

“Yes; but I think she is awfully silly. If I had the silk dresses and jewels and things she has, I don’t believe all the men in the world could make my heart ache,” said Rosy, with a toss of her head.

“That’s because you never really cared about anybody, perhaps; when you do, it will be different.”

“How is Will Hanson?” asked Rosy, abruptly.

Hester smiled, and, turning, looked at her sister, thoughtfully.

“He is well,” she said. “Rosy, I used to think you liked Will.”

“I *do* like him,” said Rosy, frankly,

“but I will never marry him—not if he hangs round till he is gray!”

“No?—why not, dear?”

“Because,” answered Rosy, “I am determined to be *rich* before I die. If I were a man I would go to work and accomplish it for myself; but as I am a woman, I must marry a rich man, I suppose,” with a little harsh laugh.

“Rich men are by no means plenty, and they are not always good or agreeable either,” said Hester.

“I don’t care; I’d marry a *toad* if he was rich!” said Rosy, emphatically. “But, then,” she continued, laughing, and looking a little ashamed, “I don’t need to be quite so much in earnest. I am not old enough to get married yet a while, even if I had the chance. But I suppose I can have my opinions about it.”

“I hope you will change them before that time comes,” said Hester, gravely.

“Oh, I shall not. We must have one worldly, mercenary person in this family.

— “It is not of myself alone I think, selfish as I am!” she added, passionately.

“It is of *you*, chiefly! Dearest, dearest Hetty, do you suppose I am blind — that I do not see how thin and pale and full of care you are! How you carry us all upon your dear, unselfish heart; and how you will continue to carry us until you die, unless some one relieves you of the burden!

“Oh, darling, I see — I know — and I love you for it; but I say it shall not be — for long!” She threw herself into her sister’s arms and sobbed in a passion of tears.

Hester soothed her as she would a child.

“Nothing is such a burden as a discontented, over-ambitious spirit,” she said to her, presently. “Try to be contented—try to be happy for *my* sake, dear. If we do our best, all will come right for us in time.”

Rosy laughed hysterically. “You have hung your faith upon that hook for a long time,” she said. “It may be stronger than I think; it has held out well any way.”

Hester smiled gently. “It has—it will,” she said. “Try it, Rosy.”

“I wish I could,” said Rosy. “I could do almost anything for you. One thing I will not do. I will not bother you any more with my wicked nonsense—if I can help it! Tell me about your-

self now; tell me everything. How is Dr. Richard Bemis? I suppose you and he go plodding on the same as ever; no quarrels, no excitement — everything dignified and sensible, as a courtship should be?”

“Ours is hardly a courtship; it is more a — *waiting*,” said Hester, smiling softly.

“Let’s see, it’s more than five years that you have been engaged, isn’t it?”

“Five years last spring,” answered Hester. As she spoke the years rolled back, and she seemed again to hear the whispered charge of her dying mother, “Take care of the children — be a mother to the little ones.”

She had promised never to leave them while they needed her care. Would a time ever come when she

would not be needed in the old home? And then she remembered, with a thrill of happiness, the reply that Richard Bemis had made to her that night when she offered to release him, "Hester, you are the only woman in the world for me, and I must wait for you, till the end of time, if need be."

"Hetty," broke in Rosy, as if musing too, "I have often wondered what it must be like, to care for one as you do for Rich—as you do for each other. I don't see how you can live apart! What a shame you can't be married! Yes," the old, troubled look coming back again, and forgetting her resolution, "yes, I must really marry a rich man, and take this family off your hands. There is no other way. You shall not sacrifice your whole life to us!"

“Oh, hush, Rosy! I do not feel that I am sacrificing my life. Nothing could make me feel so, except to know that after all my love and care one of my children had acted unworthily. For instance,” she added, “if you, dear, should marry that rich man you tell about, knowing that your heart was already given to another. Then, indeed, I should feel that so far as you were concerned, my poor life had been a failure.” She laid her hand on her pretty sister’s arm, and looked solemnly into her eyes.

Rosy clasped her in a passionate embrace. “Oh, Hetty, Hetty!” she cried, “I will try to be good and noble like you—I will indeed! I don’t wonder Richard loves you so—how could he help it! There is nobody, *nobody*

like you in all the world! If I never have anything more, I ought to be satisfied just to have such a sister! and I should be, if I were not the wickedest, most ungrateful girl in the world!”

“There, there, dear,” said Hester, soothingly, “you are weak and nervous yet, and must be very tired. I ought not to have let you talk so long. We shall have you sick again. You must go to bed directly, and I will tuck you in, as I used to do when you were a little girl.”

So she petted and soothed her, till she slept; and when, a little later, the tender moon looked in upon them — as a mother watchful of her children — she found them both sleeping peacefully in the great white bed.

CHAPTER III.

A FAMILY CONCLAVE.

IT was a few days after Rosy's arrival home, and she and Hester and Aunt Nancy still lingered at the dinner-table. Suddenly Rosy leaned back in her chair and, clearing her throat, said, with a formal, serio-comic air, "Ladies, let us have a little practical talk. With your permission, I will begin."

Their smiling silence giving assent, she proceeded:—

"I suppose," she said, "that we are awfully poor—poorer than ever, in fact; is it not so? I have been making observations, and I find that we have not

yet got another horse in place of old Dolly, deceased. I hear a solitary black pig squealing alone out there in the pen, and the old rooster's family is reduced to the two white Leghorns and one black Spanish. I've no fault to find with old Dick, however, for he seems determined to do his part towards sustaining the honor of the family, and struts round as grand and crows as loud as ever. As nearly as I can ascertain, neither of you has had a new article of clothing since I left home, a year ago. (Thank fortune I have got a few things to share with you.) And, with all due respect to your skill in cooking,—for I do believe you would manage to get up something nice to eat out of nothing,—I observe that with the exception of the grand spread

on the night of my arrival, the table has not been burdened, that is, it has not *groaned* with dainties, has it?

“In short, flour is scarce, sugar and tea are luxuries, and every meal seems to be furnished by a special providence, not to say a miracle. For instance, I can’t imagine what this soup is made of, as I haven’t seen any fresh meat since I came home,” with a comical look of inquiry.

“La ! Rosy, how you dew run on !” laughed Aunt Nancy. “We’ve been savin’ up the bone that this ’ere soup was made on, for some time. And ’twan’t nothin’ *but* a bone, nuther. I know I said ter Hester, says I, ‘It don’t seem as if there’s a mite o’ goodness tew it!’ but ye see, come ter put in a little onion and pertater and one thing

'n' nuther, it's a pretty good soup, after all!"

"It is wonderful how little a family can live on," said Hester, "though it does require more management and thought than it would to feed a well provisioned army, I dare say."

"How about the wood?" continued Rosy, still bent on investigation. "The winter is coming on, and I perceive that the wood-pile is low."

"Oh, John and Jerry attend to that. There will be plenty of time before John begins his winter's job. He's been fixing up about the place, but he is ready now for the wood, I believe. We have *wood enough*; that is one great cause for thankfulness. We shall not freeze, whatever else we suffer."

"Thank God for that," said Aunt

Nancy, devoutly. "With my rheumatiz, it would be dretful to be short on't for wood!"

"John has worked very hard all the summer and fall," said Hester. "I wish he could have more time for rest and study now; but he will have his evenings, as he says."

"How smart John is!" remarked Rosy, proudly.

Hester sighed. "Yes, if he had advantages he would accomplish a great deal, I am sure," she said.

"Girls, you needn't worry nothin' at all about that boy," said Aunt Nancy, sententiously. "If it's in him ter be somebody, and an honor to the Ruggles family — why, he *will be*, that's all! In *my* 'pinion, 'tis in him, and he *works* like forty yoke o' steers! It does beat

all! Now what more does he need? 'Tain't the *easy* road that leads to glory, you know, and as long as he's well and hearty, it won't hurt him to work. And, massy sakes, you don't hear *him* grumble — he likes it!"

"No, indeed; he never complains," assented Hester, warmly. "But, to change the subject—I want to say, Rosy, that you must not forget that while in some things we appear to be growing poorer, we are in reality better off than we have been for years. Thanks to you and John and the summer boarders, chiefly, the last hundred dollars of the mortgage on the farm is paid off, and now *it is ours*. So, with good management another year, we will be fairly started in the right direction.

"John's wages are our main stay for

the winter, of course, but I shall do all the tailoring I can get, and you will help me, and, by living carefully, we shall get comfortably through. Next summer Miss Arbuckle comes again, you know, and we hope to get big crops from the farm. I am sure the future looks quite bright."

"Oh, I suppose so," said Rosy, a little sarcastically, "but, with all our prospects, I should say it might be some little time before we roll in wealth."

"Who wants ter '*roll in wealth*,' Rosy Ruggles — you ungrateful girl! Won't nothin' dew for you, but ter dress in silks and satings and ride in your kerridge! For my part, all I'd ever think of askin' is ter git able ter 'ford a doctor to my rheumatiz, and a clean, starched white apron to put on

of an afternoon. That's all I'd ask for myself; and I know I'm an onreasonable creatur', and orter be contented with what I've got. So had you."

Aunt Nancy's simple words touched Rosy's heart. She ran round the table to her, and laid her cheek against the dear old face, as she used to do when a child.

"You dear, blessed Mamsey," said she, tremulously, "you shall have all you long for, and more too, some time, as sure as my name is Rosy Ruggles!"

Aunt Nancy was more than appeased.

"I didn't mean ter be hard on ye, dear," she said, "but you are so full of your cricks and cranks," looking at her as if the same appeared anything but faults at that moment. She rose and began clattering among the dishes; and the conversation — Rosy's "practical talk" — was

virtually ended. Suddenly the old lady stops before the window.

“Rosy,” says she, “I dew declare, I believe there’s Will Hanson comin’ up the road! I thought strange he hadn’t been round ’fore now; but like enough he didn’t hear you’d got home.”

“I can’t see what my coming is to his coming,” said Rosy, confusedly, and then laughed.

When the young man referred to opened the door and entered without knocking, according to custom among neighbors in “Sherburn Holler,” she was vexed to find her cheeks burning, and her heart beating like a trip-hammer.

“How do you do, Aunt Nancy? How do you do, Rosy?” he said, with a glad ring in his voice, not to be mistaken. He had a frank, handsome face, and that per-

sonal, magnetic charm that comes from a noble nature and perfect health and spirits.

“I didn’t know you were at home till last night, Rosy,” he remarked as he shook hands with her.

“I reckoned whuther no that wa’n’t the reason you hadn’t been round,” said Aunt Nancy.

Rosy bit her lip with vexation.

“Are you quite strong?” Will hastened to ask. “You had a fever, they said.”

“Oh, yes; I am well enough now — thank you.”

“I suppose,” he continued, lightly, “that you have come home so much in love with the city and city ways that it will seem duller than ever here in the Holler?”

“La sakes! she was glad enough to git home — hates the city and everything

about it—don't ye, Rosy?" chuckled Aunt Nancy.

"Of course, I didn't enjoy myself very much while I was sick," answered Rosy, evasively.

"I should think not," said Will, sympathetically. "See here, Rosy, I can't be spared long, this morning, but I thought perhaps you'd like to go over to the falls. Have you seen them since you came home?"

Rosy sprang up with alacrity. "No, I haven't," she said. "I should so like to go." She ran to get her hat, and they were soon on the way.

They walked along for some distance without speaking, Rosy breaking off long stalks of golden-rod, Will watching her contentedly. "Rosy," said he, at length, "I have kept a bunch of golden-rod in

my room ever since it came; queer, isn't it, for a big fellow like me to think so much of a flower?" He looked at her furtively, and gave a little embarrassed laugh.

"Well, I don't know; I like it myself," she said, indifferently.

"Oh, Rosy, you know I like it *because* you do!" he exclaimed, reproachfully. He would have seized her hand, golden-rod and all, but she drew away.

"Here we are at the falls, Will," she said, hastily, "and oh, nothing is changed! There is the old rock, our playhouse, covered with moss, as beautiful as ever. And, why! they didn't cut down the big birch, after all! How is that?" Her face beamed with delighted surprise.

Will laughed softly. "The fact is," said he, "I bought that birch — that is,

I bought it for you ; it is yours now. I gave them another that answered their purpose just as well."

"Oh, how nice of you to think of that !" said Rosy, warmly.

The falls were now directly before them. The waters came tumbling down over the rocks with a tremendous noise, but finally stretched lazily out into a quiet little brook that carried an old mill.

"The last time I was here, all this roaring sounded awfully doleful and lonesome ; but to-day it seems quite a jolly uproar," said Will, leaping over the rocks. "Come, let's climb to the devil's peak ! Give me your hand."

Rosy was as sure-footed as a young antelope, and they were soon perched high up on a cliff jutting over the waters.

They sat and talked as they used when children together. Reaching out for the few flowers that grew near them, or an occasional pretty autumn leaf, they soon gathered quite a nosegay. The sun began to sink in the west, and they spoke of returning home.

“Before we go, I should think you might say you are glad to see a fellow,” said Will, in an aggrieved tone. “You can’t help seeing how *I* feel, but *you*, Rosy — I don’t know; you seem changed, somehow,” studying her lovely face wistfully. “Yes, you *are* changed.”

“I am a year older, and I wear my hair, differently,” she said, uneasily, trying to laugh.

“Don’t tell me that you have found somebody you like better than you do

me ; I could not bear it !” cried Will, impulsively.

“Oh, no ; I like everybody just the same,” she said, ambiguously, “but” — hesitatingly — “perhaps I have changed my *ideas* in some respects.”

“How ? What do you mean — tell me !”

“Well,” said Rosy, with an effort, “it is hard to think of such things *here*” — looking round upon the solemn hills, then down upon the peaceful meadows. “It seems to me, sitting here, as if life were only a grand, sweet thing, needing nothing but nature and beauty and,” shyly, “perhaps love, to make it complete. But in the city, where I have been — and even at home, sometimes, I feel I need more ; more than Sherburn or any one in it can give. There !

Oh, Will, I know you will despise me, but I *hate poverty*, and I do long to be *rich!*"

He looked at her attentively and gravely. "*I am well off,*" he said, with simple dignity. "You should never know want."

"Oh, I know," she said, with a shrug of disdain, "you are what Holler folks call '*forehanded*'; but to the wealth one sees in the city, it is poverty."

"Yes, everything is comparative in this world," he answered. "But the city! I don't think I could live there, not if they should give me the whole of it. I hate the noise and confusion of the streets — the pushing and crowding after place, and the hurry and straining after money! As if that were all!

“When I go over the mountain to trade, I am always glad to get back here again, where there is room—where I can breathe the pure air from off these hills!” He stretched his hands forth to the mountains, and turned to Rosy with a look whose eloquence moved her deeply.

“I love the hills, too,” she said, choking back a sob. “But,” she added, defiantly, “hills and waterfalls, and even the pure air of heaven, can’t feed us, nor buy rich clothes and jewels, and carriages to ride in!”

“Rich clothes and jewels, and carriages to ride in!” repeated Will, mechanically, feeling a sudden blank despair settling down upon him.

They sat in silence, until, finally, Will rose and shook himself, as if to rouse

him from some baleful spell. He gave his hand to Rosy. "Come! it is getting late ; let us go home," he said.

The nosegay of golden-rod and pretty scarlet leaves lay forgotten on the cliffs ; the gold and purple faded out of the western sky, and the tender twilight settled softly down upon the plain, as the two, hushed to a strange silence, made their way back to the house.

Will left Rosy at the door, with one parting look of love and pain, which she dimly saw through a mist of tears.

She rushed in to her own room, and, throwing herself on the great, white bed, sobbed as if her heart would break.

Here, a little later, Hester found her, and, in her own sweet way, won her to unburden all her heart.

Rosy repeated something of the con-

versation between herself and Will Hanson. "And oh, Hetty!" she moaned, "he seemed so stunned and shocked! And he has gone away, thinking I don't care for anybody nor anything but *money*, and that I am a mean, selfish girl! I *do* want to be rich—but *you* know I am not all selfish—and oh, oh," hysterically, "*I know now* that I care more for Will than for all the world besides! *What shall I do?*"

Hester could not help smiling through her tears.

"There, there, dear!" she said, soothingly, stroking the bright head; "it will all come right in time."

"That's what you always say!" cried Rosy, passionately. "But it won't all come right *this* time! It *can't*! Don't you see, I *hate* to be poor and live the

way folks do in Sherburn, and I love — *love* Will Hanson! So there it is!”

“Rather a desperate case, dear, I confess,” said Hester, “but you will surely find your way out of it, if you are true to yourself, and remember one thing; you could never live without love — you have a too warm and affectionate nature.”

“Oh, I don’t expect to be happy ever again!” sobbed Rosy, dejectedly.

Hester soothed her as best she could, and finally coaxed her to undress and go to bed.

But her own heart was heavy. Rosy’s waywardness and ambition were beginning to cause her serious anxiety. She feared there might be more misery in store for her yet.

CHAPTER IV.

TROUBLE. — DR. RICHARD.

SOON after this, a trouble came upon the little family, that for the time being drove all other thoughts from their minds.

John, who was somewhat of a carpenter, had undertaken, among other odd jobs, to repair the roof of the barn, which leaked badly. Overcome by a sudden and unaccountable dizziness, he made a misstep and fell from a high beam to the floor, where he lay like one dead, while poor little Jerry, who had been helping his brother, ran in, crying out that "Johnny was killed!"

They managed to get him into the house and on to a bed, and it was not long

before he was restored to consciousness; but he was badly bruised and shaken, and his right leg proved to be broken. He suffered great pain before they could fetch a doctor, and Jerry and Rosy went half wild with grief.

Aunt Nancy added to the general excitement by rehearsing her recent dreams and forewarnings. “Didn’t I tell ye somethin’ awful was a-goin’ ter happen, when that ’ere jar fell down off’n the shelf without a livin’ soul touchin’ on’t? And the dreams I have had! Night afore last I heard a trumpit sound, and last night it was a turrible storm! I’ve been prepared for this all along!”

“It’s a good thing to be prepared,” remarked Rosy, bitterly. “I’m prepared for any misery, myself.”

There proved to be one consoling fea-

ture in the aspect of affairs. The accident brought Dr. Richard Bemis to them, and his very presence was a relief and comfort, not only to Hester, but to all the family.

John bore the pain of having the bone set like a hero, but when told, in answer to his inquiries, that he might have to lie by for the winter, he rebelled.

"I can't! I can't!" he said. "What will become of my chopping? I must be earning something!" and for the first time he gave way to tears.

They tried to console him. "Perhaps it will be a good thing for you in the end," said Hester. "I have been wishing that you could have more time for study." But he thought only of the family, and could not see how they were to live without his earnings.

“Do try to believe that God will take care of us,” whispered Hester at last, and, worn out with pain and excitement, he dropped asleep with these words lingering in his ears, his hand clasped lovingly in hers.

Then the doctor came and stood beside Hester, looking down with deep solicitude into the face so dear to him. He leaned over and drew her head to his bosom.

“Hester,” he said, a world of tenderness in his eyes, “you are tired, and you are troubled; let me help you.”

“You do help me — you have helped me already,” said Hester, glowing beneath his gaze. “How long it is since I have seen you!”

“Yes ; fortunately, I had just come home. But this is rather a sorry meeting. Poor John! I hope he will do well, and I

see nothing to hinder, if he only will not fret himself to death."

"Dear boy, it is hard for him," sighed Hester, softly.

"Do you know, I am almost jealous of your children!" said Richard, half seriously. "And sometimes I am tempted to doubt if they are worth the sacrifice we are making for them, or, at least, if it is *necessary*. But forgive me, darling," — seeing the shadow come back to her face, — "and let us both take courage. There is a prospect of my going over the mountain to settle permanently. Old Dr. Manning is about retiring from practice, and as I have been recently connected with him somewhat, I shall expect to come into a large share of his business. He is a good friend to me, besides, and that is worth something."

“Oh, yes! How glad I am!” said Hester, her eyes beaming. “Of course, your success has always been only a question of time,” she added, proudly, “but it is good to see it nearer.”

“*It shall be near,*” said the doctor. “In a year or two, at the farthest, I ought to be able to take you — and ‘*our family*’ — unto myself.”

“*Our family!*” She repeated the generous words tremulously, gratefully. “Oh, Richard!” she murmured, “I do believe you are the best, most unselfish man in the world!”

He stopped her mouth with kisses.

“Now, one thing more — for I hear Aunt Nancy coming, and I must attend to her ‘rheumatiz’ — promise me that you will take better care of your health, and let me know at once if you need me.”

“Yes, I promise,” she said, and Aunt Nancy at that moment came tiptoeing into the room.

“It’s a massy he’s fell off ter sleep, poor boy!” she whispered. “I s’pose Hester’s been tellin’ ye, doctor, ’bout my forewarnin’s and dreams—never knew ’em ter fail.

“Here’s the bottle for the lingment. I declare,”—aside to Hester,—“who’d ’a’ thought poor Johnny’s misfortin’ would be the means o’ my gittin’ a doctor to my rheumatiz! Now, if I only had the *aprons!*”

“‘It’s an ill wind that blows nobody any good,’” quoted the doctor, who had listened much amused, though he did not fully understand her allusions.

“That’s so! ‘what’s one man’s meat is another man’s pisen!’” she answered glibly, not to be outdone.

The doctor's visit seemed to cheer them all, and left them a little stronger to bear the extra burden that had come upon them. And yet, as has been seen, no one thought of seeking pecuniary aid from Richard Bemis.

In the first place, pride would have restrained them from calling upon him, under the existing circumstances, even if he had been abundantly able to assist them. But they knew he was not.

On the other hand, he was far from realizing the straits and perplexities that made up the daily life of the Ruggles family. In Sherburn, people were supposed to derive their support mainly from their farms ; and when the crops were good, and there was no extra outlay, it would seem that the Ruggles place, small as it was, might be a con-

siderable dependence, if not a comfortable support.

After Dr. Bemis returned to the city, only an occasional letter passed between him and Hester. They were both too busy to spend much time in letter-writing.

Rosy, imagining her sister's spirits were drooping, roused herself to be more cheerful and helpful. She and Jerry did the "chores" together, like "two good boys," as she expressed it to John, who declared that her funny account of their doings was as good as a circus.

Among other jobs, she and Jerry set about replenishing the wood-pile, and they worked at it with great vigor, Rosy sawing away, very awkwardly at first, but by and by "as handy as a

man," Jerry said, admiringly. Jerry split and piled.

On stormy days, or when she was needed, Rosy helped Hester with the sewing, or waited upon John, and heard him recite his lessons. In short, she behaved in a manner so altogether admirable that Hester could only wonder, and thank God.

Rosy had not seen Will Hanson since the day they went to the falls together, except once at church it happened that during the singing of the last hymn their eyes met, and, though neither knew it of the other, each felt somehow comforted by what the glance revealed, and went away less miserable.

"My rheumatiz is gittin' along splendid," said Aunt Nancy, ambiguously, one night, as they sat around the fire.

“And, with two sech smart *boys* to take John’s place, we should be all right if we could only manage ter git enough ter eat.”

“‘Aye, there’s the rub’!” said Rosy. “We’ve got the old cow, and that’s about all. Sometimes I’m so *meat-hungry* that I am tempted to kill her myself, and eat her up!” with a comically savage grimace. “But that would not do, because then we shouldn’t have the milk.”

“No,” said Hester; “but I guess we will manage to get a little meat to-morrow, somehow.”

The next morning, while they were all at work in the kitchen, some one rapped at the door. Rosy hastened to open it, and there stood good Uncle Abel Davis, who lived away off on a hill-farm, miles away.

“Why, Uncle Abel, how do you do?” cried Rosy, cordially. “Come right in and see the folks.”

“No, no ; can’t stop,” said the old man. “Glad ter see ye home agin,” chucking her under the chin. “Come over ’n’ try our cider ’n’ bring Hester — bring the hull family!

“Sorry John’s laid up so — pooty rough ! Fact is, I’m in a dretful hurry — jest stopped ter leave some fixin’s mother sent the boy, and this little piece o’ beef.

“Jest killed a beef creatur, ye know — more ’n we want. If ye can’t eat it yourselves, give it ter the hens — good for ’em !” and the odd, kind old man was off before Rosy could say a word.

She lugged in the beef, and Jerry took the basket. They set them down in

the middle of the kitchen floor, and executed a war-dance round them — “for all the world,” Aunt Nancy said, “like tew hungry Injins.”

They carried the basket in to John, and let him uncover it. There were jelly, cold chicken, nice apples, and gingerbread, such as boys like, and a huge cake of maple sugar.

“Blessings on Uncle Abel and on *Aunt Abel*, his wife!” cried Rosy, excitedly. Then she rushed back, and, dropping down on the floor beside the leg of beef, burst into weak hysterical tears.

“Oh, Rosy, Rosy! were you so hungry?” exclaimed Hester. “I do believe you were starving for meat! Why didn’t you let us know before?”

“Nonsense!” said Rosy, jumping up

and brushing away her tears. “A low diet agrees with me! Do you know, Hetty, there is nothing like hunger—real *gnawing hunger*—for curing the heartache! A counter-irritant—you know; ha, ha! I don’t see how poor folks can ever be very sentimental. ‘When want comes in at the door, love flies out at the window,’ you know.

“I believe,” she rattled on, “that I could cure Miss Arbuckle in a fortnight—yes, in a week—if she would only follow my directions—”

“Oh, Rosy, don’t!” There was a look of grief and pain in Hester’s face, and she seemed on the point of herself breaking down. She seized Rosy’s hand and drew her towards the bedroom.

“Girls !” Aunt Nancy called after them, brandishing the big butcher-knife, “girls, the beefsteak will be ready in ten minutes !” They looked at each other, and laughed hysterically.

“Dear old soul !” said Rosy, tearfully. “She has more common sense than both of us !”

Then they shut the door and fell into each other’s arms, and cried together. All the self-denial, and the hunger, and the anxious care of weeks avenged themselves at last. They spoke not one word, but just clung to each other, and cried till they had cried their fill.

Aunt Nancy put her head in at the door.

“The beefsteak’s all done to a turn,” she said. “Let’s eat it while it’s hot.”

Rosy sprang up and wiped her eyes.

“A good idea!” she said, laughing.

“Come on, Hetty!” and they went out to dinner.

“Now,” remarked Aunt Nancy, helping Rosy to the beefsteak first of all, “if anybody in this family goes ter bed hungry to-night, it won’t be my fault, nor the fault o’ Providence.”

CHAPTER V.

JERRY AS A HERO.

ONE morning, about a week after the events in the foregoing chapter occurred, Hester announced that the flour-barrel was empty.

“I have been saving it along hoping to have a little left to make Jerry his cake for Christmas ; but the meal gave out at last, and I had to use it. Now we have neither. We ought to have had some corn ground before, but I was waiting for a neighbor to come along who would take it to mill. I hated to ask any one to go on purpose. How we do miss old Dolly !”

“Why can’t I take a bag of corn to mill on my sled?” asked Jerry, eagerly. “I could haul it just as easy as anything.”

Hester looked at the little fellow. “It is three miles to mill, and a long, cold road,” she said, thoughtfully.

“Pooh, what’s three miles? Don’t I walk most as far every day when I go to school?”

“But there are no houses where you could stop to warm.”

“Let the child go,” put in Aunt Nancy. “It’s a case o’ necessitude, and the Lord’ll take care on him.”

“If the poor little man should happen to freeze to death on the road, I digh know as it would be much worswould starvation; and that’s what fly on. coming to!” exclaimed Ro^c he, “while

“No, we ain’t all a-comin’ ter starvation, nuther !” said Aunt Nancy. “We shall weather it—you mark my words now, Rosy Ruggles. It’s alwers darkest ’fore dawn.”

“Say,” persisted Jerry, pulling at his sister’s gown, “mayn’t I go with the corn ?”

“I suppose you will have to, dear—we need it so much,” she said, reluctantly. “But you must bundle up warm, and perhaps you will get a ride back.” Then she caught him up in her arms and kissed him fondly. “You are Hester’s own little man !” she whispered.

He returned her embrace with interest, and then ran away to get ready for his trip, taken in the thought of helping Hester. The sun was shining brightly when he started. “Dolly !” for a mile or so he went

merrily on his way. Though it was pretty cold, he did not mind it much, because he was used to that ; but it was very slow travelling, for the load was heavy, and as it took about all his strength to haul it, he lost a good deal of time in resting.

All would have been well, however, but a terrible snow squall now set in. Just as he had passed the big pine tree that was called the half-way mark to the mill, the wind began to blow a hurricane, and the air was so filled with the thickly falling snow that he could hardly see his way. The sharp wind cut like a knife, and searched poor Jerry's well worn garments, chilling him through and through. But, thinking it would soon be over, he struggled bravely on.

"I can't freeze," thought he, "while

I have to work so hard." But soon he grew strangely tired and faint, and was obliged to sit down every few steps to rest and get his breath.

Then he would rally for a moment, and, starting up, exert all his remaining strength to go on a little farther.

"They must have the meal at home," he murmured. "It is to help Hester, —and I love Hester. She said I was her 'little man' too, so I must be brave." He remembered Aunt Nancy's words, "The Lord will take care on him," and looked blindly up into the heavens, wondering vaguely if the Lord would indeed take care of a little boy like him. But finally will and strength failed, and he sank down beside his sled, unconscious.

There, a little later, a neighbor on

his way to mill found him, half buried in the snow. The storm was over and the sun was shining pleasantly as if it had always shone the same, and the mountains looked down protectingly from above on either side, as if to guard the brave young life.

The kind man chafed his limbs, and soon restored him to consciousness. He then lifted him and his sled on to his own strong pung, and drove to the mill as fast as possible. The miller's wife warmed and fed him, and Jerry declared he felt as good as new.

Some severe remarks were made about sending such a little fellow so far in winter weather ; but Jerry, feeling instinctively that the family honor was involved, made light of the whole affair — explaining how his brother was laid

up with a broken leg, and he teased his sister till she let him come.

The corn was ground at last, and they rode home, Jerry wrapped up warmly in the farmer's buffalo robe.

The anxiety of the family during his absence can be imagined. And when he came back safe and sound, and told his eloquent little story, they cried over him, and petted and praised him to such an extent that he went up to bed feeling quite like a hero.

Aunt Nancy followed him up stairs with a bowl of catnip tea, and a hot flannel to wrap round his feet, and while she was tucking him in with unusual care, Jerry whispered in her ear, "Aunt Nancy, I guess the Lord *does* take care of little boys."

"Of course he doos!" was her em-

phatic rejoinder. "And now you shet up your eyes and go right to sleep." So she left him to his faith and to his dreams.

Jerry's room was a typical New England farm-house garret. A dozen narrow, steep, stairs led up to it. It extended the whole length of the house and had a tiny window at each end. It was unfinished, — that is, unlathed and unplastered, — and the floor was rough, unplanned boards. But the chinks in the roof had been pretty effectually stopped up, so that it was water-tight, and on the floor in front of the bed was one of Aunt Nancy's largest, thickest braided rugs.

Even in the severest winter weather, when snugly tucked in between the feather-bed and warm blankets and comforters Jerry could laugh at the cold.

Jerry loved that garret ; the children all loved it. In the first place, it was sweet with all the old-fashioned, good smells. The dried apple and pumpkin that hung on the rafters, the bundles of catnip and sage and sweet marjoram, of lavender and pennyroyal, that accumulated every year. Then in good seasons there were huge piles of butternuts, hazel-nuts, and beechnuts, which furnished many a feast, as well as fascinating occupation in the cracking, for the stormy days and long winter evenings. And the children liked them to carry to school in their pockets.

All along the roadsides near the school-houses in the country, everywhere, may be seen the great, flat stones littered with nut-shells, left there, not by the squirrels, as one might at

first suppose, but by the children, and, seeing them, we are reminded, perhaps, of many a careless, happy hour in our own school-days.

Well, it was in the garret chamber that the nuts were stored. The yellow corn, too, occupied a bin in one corner, unfortunately handy to the thieving mice.

The great family loom stood opposite Jerry's bed. Jerry's grandmother had woven all the cloth for family wear. Every fall she wove webs of red or blue or checked flannel for her own and her daughter's dresses, and also the cloth for the boys' jackets and trowsers. But the old loom had not been used legitimately since Jerry's recollection. It was for years his and Rosy's playhouse. Hither they had been wont to bring their dolls and toys, and anything in

the shape of eatables that they could coax Aunt Nancy to give them, and they would play at keeping house in grand style. But this, too, was past; Jerry was older now, and the old loom had been gradually assuming a new character. He had learned to regard it as a sort of personal presence,—a gigantic sentinel and protector,—and when he dimly saw it standing there, just before dropping off to sleep, he felt indefinitely that he owed to the loom much of his comfortable sense of security.

Dearer than all were the familiar sounds that came to him in the solitude of his garret chamber.

The roar of the waterfalls among the mountains seemed to Jerry's religious young soul the awful voice of God him-

self—a ceaseless reminder of his omnipresence and power. Had he been less conscientious and innocent, it would have filled him with fear and dread. As it was, adoration and awe were the only feelings it inspired. This one sound of the waterfalls was the grand accompaniment to all the lesser sounds in nature, and the “Holler” people grew to love it, and to miss it and pine for it when they went away, as the dwellers on the coast do for the noise of the sea.

Next to the morning concerts of the birds, Jerry enjoyed the pipings of the cheerful frogs. They always seemed to close the day with hope and promise for to-morrow.

Then there was the rain on the roof! How many of us remember that sound somewhat as we do our mother’s lullaby!

How many tired heads and hearts long
in vain to-day for that perfect, ideal
sleep of their youth, when the patter of
the rain on the humble roof lulled
them to sweet forgetfulness and rest.

CHAPTER VI.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

A VERY strong friendship — we might almost call it a romantic attachment — existed between Rosy and her brother John. There was just enough difference in their ages to render them companionable, and in their temperaments to make each a help and support to the other.

John thoroughly admired his sister. He considered her the handsomest girl he had ever seen, and the smartest and best. Though many boys at his age begin to have their favorites among the girls of their acquaintance, he had never seemed to care for any one but her. Either consciously or unconsciously, he

compared and weighed them all in the balance with Rosy, and found them wanting.

So lover-like was his devotion, in fact, that Will Hanson's evident liking for Rosy had caused him considerable uneasiness.

"Why should Will Hanson come hanging round *my* sister?" he grumbled to himself; "why wouldn't some other boy's sister do just as well!" It did not occur to him that possibly Will's taste was as fastidious as his own; that he, too, could appreciate Rosy's perfections.

And to Rosy there was no one quite like John. Her ambition in regard to his future was as boundless as his own. She never questioned but that if he only had the chance he would become a very

great man. It is an advantage to any boy to be believed in, and to have great things expected of him. Such a boy is likely to at least do the best of which he is capable.

The two were in the habit of having long confidences; they could always say to each other what they could to no one else — not even to Hester. So, on the morning after Jerry's heroic adventure, Rosy went to John's room and sat down by him with the intention of relieving her overcharged heart and mind.

"John," she began, abruptly, "I was all upset by yesterday's doings, and somehow I can't get over it. To think of that blessed baby going through with such an experience! To think that it was *necessary* to keep this family from starving!" she added, bitterly. "I only

wish I had gone myself, and I wish I had been frozen to death and buried up in the snow — so deep that nobody could ever find me !”

She dropped her head down on the pillow, and sobbed passionately.

John made a sudden movement that caused him to groan aloud with pain, and put his arm around her, and laid his cheek to hers.

Rosy continued to sob, till presently she imagined that she felt tears on her face that were not her own. She stopped crying and looked at John.

“Why, John — John Ruggles !” she said, “are you crying? Oh, what a miserable, wicked girl I am, to come in here, when you have so much to bear already, and make you feel ten times worse! What a selfish, thoughtless

sister!" and her tears fell all the faster.

"Rosy, Rosy, hush! you are the best, dearest sister in the world, always. I am only weak—as weak as I am useless!"

"Now, John Ruggles, you stop this instant!" said Rosy, sitting up and shaking back her hair, and putting on her most energetic air of authority. "*You* have some excuse for being shiftless and poor and hungry! Who ever heard of a person with a broken leg going to mill—or doing anything else, except lying still and obeying orders! We don't count you in now,—of course not," with a grand wave of the hand, which struck John as so comical that he laughed in spite of himself. "Yes," he assented, "it is quite evident that I am

not 'counted in.' But Rosy,—” in some embarrassment, “tell me, are you—are you—*very hungry?*”

She turned upon him squarely. “Are—are *you?*” she retorted, imitating his tone and manner. Then they both laughed—Rosy hysterically.

“Hungry!” she said, “why I haven’t had enough to eat—no, not *half* enough—since we received Uncle Abel’s donation! And, do you know, it makes me wild to think how easy it would be to just ask them to bring us some more. They have enough and to spare—and how glad the dear souls would be to feed us, if they only knew!” She looked at John feverishly, eagerly; but his face grew firm and cold. She understood at once. “Of course I wouldn’t think of such a thing—” she stammered; “oh

dear, no! not for a moment; but one can't help thinking. Is it not tantalizing to remember that beefsteak and the pie — and everything !”

“Yes, yes, it is,” said John, “but let us hope that things will be different soon; either we shall have more to eat — or, who knows but we may learn to live without eating, or —”

“Or die — *starve*,” finished Rosy, bitterly.

“See here,” said John, wishing to divert her. “See here, I have food enough for my *brain*, haven't I? I can cram my old head till it bursts, if I choose. And I have been studying hard, I tell you. Here's Chemistry, Philosophy, Ancient History, English Literature — and all these medical books that Doctor Richard brought me. Do

you know, I mean to be a great doctor? That's why I am so anxious to get ahead in my Latin ; and Mr. Aiken tells me I am doing first-rate."

Rosy nodded. "Of course," she said, proudly. "And if it were not so trying to you, we should all be glad you are having such a good chance to study."

He turned to her abruptly. "Look here," he said, "I am going to tell you what I've been thinking of lately. There's one thing I could do—that is, if I had anything to do with. If I had a saw and some white-wood and walnut, I could make those beautiful brackets and baskets and things you've seen in the city stores, and perhaps sell them for a good price. See, I have designed these patterns," displaying several drawings which Rosy thought very graceful and pretty.

“How much money would you need, to begin with ? ” she asked.

“Oh, about ten dollars, for material and all,” said John, with a dismal sigh, “but it might as well be ten hundred.”

“The money may come; who knows?” said Rosy, dreamily.

“Oh, yes; the sky may fall,” he returned, sarcastically.

Rosy hesitated. Should she tell him of what had entered her own mind, of the project which as yet was only a dream? It might never be anything more. But, yes! she would tell him; it could do no harm, and might at least make him a little more hopeful. Besides, she wanted to know what he would think of it. She relied a good deal upon John’s judgment.

“Johnny,” she began, nervously, “per-

haps *I* can earn the money you want so much. I am thinking some *of going into business*. Just imagine *me* a woman of business! with *my sign* out over the front door!"

"And what would it say on that sign — over the front door?" asked John, laughing, but curious.

She put her lips down close to his ear and whispered it, —

"*Rosanna Ruggles, Dressmaker!*"

"No?" said John.

"Yes, really," she answered, delightedly. Since she had given expression to the idea in audible words, it did seem more like reality, more practicable.

"Well," said John, "I always thought you were the brightest, 'cutest girl in the village, and now I know it; what's more, you will make it go — this

business! How did you happen to think of it?"

"Oh, it came to me. The fact is, I've laid awake hours and hours since I came home, trying to think of something I could do."

"Poor Rosy!" said John, sympathetically.

"I guess you'd say *poor Rosy* if you knew *all* I have to trouble me," she said, half crying, half laughing.

"Hulloa! what have you been doing? Getting into debt — or *love*? I do believe it is love!" he added, teasingly.

But, having excited his curiosity, she seemed satisfied. "Never mind now!" she said; "I was going to tell you that I think I will ask Mrs. Aiken what she thinks of my plan, and if she encourages me, I will go ahead and try it."

“That’s right, — I would,” said John.

Mrs. Aiken was the minister’s wife, and she had been for years a faithful friend and counsellor to the family. She thought very favorably of Rosy’s scheme.

“I have no doubt you can do *something* to begin with, and perhaps eventually work into a nice little business,” she said. “The sewing circle meets with me next week, and I will speak to the ladies about it. It does seem to me that a good many will be glad to employ you ; I shall, for one, and you may begin on my new black cashmere. I will come over to-morrow afternoon to be measured, if that time suits your convenience.”

Rosy went home feeling as if she were fairly started in business already. She told the family about it (she had

not breathed a word of it before, except to John), and they were both surprised and delighted, and wondered why they had not thought of it before.

"You know," said Hester, "you have fitted our dresses for years, and you do trim beautifully, when you have anything to trim with."

"Yes," said Aunt Nancy, admiringly, "you alwers was a born dressmaker, Rosy."

"I have got a new chart," said Rosy, "a great improvement on the old one." She brought it out and explained it to Hester; then they looked over the new fashion-books she had brought from the city, and before bedtime Mrs. Aiken's black cashmere dress was all planned. And the planning is half, as every dress-maker knows.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MINISTER. — THE OLD SUGAR-BOWL.

JERRY had a positive genius for tearing his clothes, and the next day, early in the afternoon, he came in with his only pair of trowsers greatly demoralized. Aunt Nancy looked at them in despair.

“Jerry Ruggles !” she said, eying him severely over her spectacles, “how many times more do ye s’pose I’m a-goin’ ter mend them trowsers? They’re patched so now, I can’t tell what they’s made on in the fust place. I’m a good min’ ter make ye wear petticoats! You’ll have ter, fur’s I see, ’fore the winter’s out.”

But when Jerry began to whimper, her heart relented, and, taking off the offending garment, she made Jerry sit down in a chair, and wrapped an old shawl round his legs. Then she set about the mending. Before she had finished, the minister and his wife came in.

Mrs. Aiken soon went into the sitting-room to see about the new dress; but the minister lingered by the kitchen fire, chatting with Aunt Nancy.

Presently, that good lady, happening to turn round, discovered the cellar door ajar.

“Wall, there!” she said, “I thought I felt a draught. Jerry, go ’n’ shet th’ suller door.” the

Jerry looked at his half-bare l’ John’s then appealingly at his aur eyes were on her work. at and protégé.

“Jerry !” she repeated, sharply, “why don’t ye go ’n’ shet that door ?”

Receiving no answer, she looked up and remembered how it was with Jerry.

“Dear me ! I dew declare !” she ejaculated, greatly flustered, as she rose and shut it herself.

The minister smiled, and, going over to the little fellow, bundled him on to his knee — old shawl and all. “Jerry,” he said, “what would you wish for, if you could have just what you want ?”

The good man had in mind a pair of pantaloons at home, which he thought might be made over for the boy.

n. Jerry looked up into his face reverently so in moment, without answering ; then on in t. : —

ter make yoose I *ought* to wish I might ter, fur’s I see, heaven, or something of

that sort, but I'd *rather* be *alive* and have lots o' *money*."

The minister looked surprised, and Jerry felt sure he disapproved.

"I *hate* to be poor; don't you?" he said, deprecatingly.

"The Son of Man had not where to lay his head," returned the minister, gently, stroking Jerry's bright hair.

"Does that mean he hadn't any home?" asked Jerry, wonderingly.

"Yes, my son."

"Why-e-e! what in the world *did* he do? Did he *board round*?"

The minister laughed *out loud*, and, dropping the astonished Jerry into a chair, went off muttering something to the effect that he "must go and hear John's lesson."

John was the old man's pet and protégé.

It was Mr. Aiken who loaned him books to read, and talked them over with him afterwards. And since he got beyond the district school he had directed his studies, and, when necessary, heard him recite. For he was himself a scholar, though he had no ambition to shine as such, and would not have exchanged his mountain home and the simple people of his charge for all that cities could afford : —

Remote from towns, he ran his godly race ;
He ne'er had changed nor wished to change his place.

In return for his kindness, John revered and loved him as a son.

“This accident rather interferes with the chopping business, I suppose,” he remarked to John that afternoon.

“Yes sir; and if it were not for my

books, I believe I should fret myself to death. It is so hard to lie here and do nothing, and be supported by a pack of women !”

“Easy! easy!” said the minister, smiling. “It is well enough to have proper spirit, but patience is also a virtue.”

“Yes, but it is I who should work for them — not they for me !” he said, bitterly.

“I wonder if we can’t think of something for you to do. Let us see, what is there ?”

John hesitated. “I don’t suppose it is of any use to speak of it,” he said at last, “but when I was over the mountain, in the fall, I saw a good many brackets, and other things, sawed out of black-walnut and white-wood. They were very pretty, and sold at good prices. I

thought then I could make some much handsomer, and I think so now, if I only had a saw and the materials." Then he showed his designs.

"How much would the saw cost?"

"Oh, about eight dollars, and then the material,—say ten dollars to begin with;—but we might as well say a hundred, for that matter," he added, impatiently. He did not mention Rosy's hopeful suggestion—the thought of using her earnings upon any experiment of his was out of the question in his own mind.

The minister looked grave: ten dollars was a good deal of money.

"Ah, well, do not fret," he said; "and lay it before the Lord; lay it before the Lord, my son."

John smiled grimly. His faith was

rather below par just now ; but the minister bade him a cheerful good-by, and he and his wife soon took their departure.

Little Jerry had come into John's room in season to hear the latter part of the conversation. He curled himself up on the foot of the bed and with his beloved jack-knife and a bit of board began to whittle and think and wish.

"*Ten dollars!* oh, what a lot of money ! If I was only a big boy now, I would manage to get it for him." The desire so burdened his heart that he dreamed about money all night, and woke up still troubled and anxious in the morning. At the breakfast-table Hester noticed his unwonted gravity, but she said nothing.

Suddenly the boy jumped up, with his mouth full of johnny-cake, hauled

his chair after him, and capered round the room, hooting and acting "for all the world like a crazy creatur'," Aunt Nancy said. Accustomed as they were to Jerry's antics, they were all somewhat startled by this unusual demonstration.

"What under the sun ails ye, Jerry Ruggles? Have ye swallowed another tooth? Come here, this instant, and lem me see!" exclaimed Aunt Nancy.

"Oh, I've got it! I've got!" screamed Jerry, rushing up to her and hugging her till she couldn't breathe.

"What have ye got, child? Lem me see — and behave yourself!"

"I've got ten dollars — the ten dollars for Johnny! He can have his saw now, and earn stacks o' money!"

"Girls," said the old lady, rising deliberately from the table, "you must

help me ter put that 'ere child ter bed this minute, and git some mustard draughts on to his feet, or he'll be a ravin' lunatic 'fore night !”

“Wait a minute,” said Hester. “Jerry dear, come here,” and she drew him on to her lap. “You aren't crazy, are you ? What is it ? Tell us all about it.”

“I guess I *ain't* crazy !” exclaimed Jerry, with an indignant glance at Aunt Nancy, “and if you want to put mustard draughts on to my feet, — you just try it, that's all ! *There's* the ten dollars !” pointing triumphantly at great-grand-mother's old sugar-bowl.

“Don't you remember what Miss Arbuckle said about that sugar-bowl ! *I* do ! She said *she'd give us ten dollars for it any time !*”

“Sure enough, she did,” ejaculated

Aunt Nancy, slowly, "and I alwers thought she must be a little weak-minded to vally an old sugar-bowl so high. It never cost more'n seventy-five cents when 'twas new."

"But, aunty, it's over a hundred years old," said Rosy.

"All the wuss for that. Who wouldn't ruther have a new thing than an old one! There can't be much wear in it; it's cracked now."

"Yes," assented Hester, "and I didn't mean to use it much. I don't know how I happened to put it on this morning."

"I know," said Rosy, laughing. "I've noticed that whenever Hetty feels uncommonly worried or low, she puts on the old sugar-bowl."

"Just as she gives me my pretty china

mug to use when I'm sick!" interrupted Jerry.

Hester smiled faintly; she did not deny it. "As far as the money is concerned," she continued, "I'm afraid there's nothing practicable in Jerry's idea, since Miss Arbuckle is not here."

Jerry's face fell, and he said no more about it, but he continued to ponder over it.

The next day was Sunday, and in the afternoon, when he was sitting alone with John, he asked him, as he often did, if he might have a sheet of paper, and take his lead-pencil. John allowed him to have them and went on with his reading.

We copy the letter that Jerry, with great labor and thought, with much twisting and chewing of the tongue, and cramping of his chubby fingers, wrote

to Miss Arbuckle. It was printed in large, bold letters, and Jerry felt very proud of it—so much so that he was sorry he could not show it to the family:—

DEER MIS. RBUCKEL.

Jony has brok his leg and he lays abed and feels bad cos he can't urn eny munny. So do I and me and Rosy chops the wod. Jony wants 10 dolers to by a sor so he can make sum things to urn munny. You can have the ole shugr-bole you sed you wod give 10 dolers. I send my luv.

Pleas ansir rite off cos I'm in a hurry.

JERRY RUGGLES.

This epistle he put carefully away in his pocket, and the next day he stopped at the minister's on his way to school, and laid the case before the minister's wife and showed the letter he had written. She read it through thoughtfully, without a smile or a twinkle of the eye,

and told him if he would leave it with her, and trust to Providence, she thought it would all come out as he desired.

He left the precious letter, and went away with the great secret almost overweighing his young heart, and feeling that he could not wait very long even for Providence—the anxiety and suspense were so hard to bear.

CHAPTER VIII.

DRESSMAKING. — HIGH ART.

As a result of this interview, it came to pass that about a week afterwards a neighbor brought a letter to the house, post-marked Boston, and directed in printed letters to "Master Jerry Ruggles, Sherburn Holler." The contents were a ten-dollar bill and the following note:—

DEAR LITTLE JERRY:—I send you the price of the old sugar-bowl, which I shall be very glad to have. Will you keep it safe for me till I come up next summer? I send a kiss to you, and love to all.

ANNIE ARBUCKLE.

Jerry snatched the money, threw down the letter — his first letter — for the others to read, and, rushing into John's room, put

the crisp new bill into his hand ; then laying his curly head down on his big brother's breast, he sobbed aloud.

John looked at the money and at Jerry in amazement, and when, at last, he was made to comprehend it all, "head of the family" though he were, he cried too, joined eventually by the others, until Rosy, in order to change the aspect of affairs, dragged Jerry out into the middle of the floor, and, with great ceremony, introduced him to her audience in these words : "Ladies and gentleman, behold the twice-proved hero of the Ruggles family ! The bravest, dearest, 'cutest little Yankee boy in the world !"

"Hurrah !" shouted John, and Rosy joined in. Aunt Nancy waved her dish-cloth and tremulously echoed it, and Hester kissed him without a word.

John kept Jerry with him all the rest of the evening, amusing him and telling him stories, till for once he had his fill. In short, he went to bed so happy that he could hardly realize he was the same little boy that had worried through all the anxious days since he sent that letter to Boston.

To tell the truth, the Ruggles pride suffered somewhat on account of Jerry's transaction; but they consoled themselves with the thought that they could set the matter right next summer, when Miss Arbuckle came.

John procured the much-coveted saw and materials, and set to work at once, with great enthusiasm. He very soon began to turn out articles so wonderful and pretty that Rosy declared there must be some magic about it.

The first lot he sent to the city, Doctor Bemis took to a dealer with whom he was acquainted, who not only bought them at a fair price, but also praised the patterns and the work, and ordered more.

To say that John was happy would but feebly express his feeling of relief and satisfaction at being no longer quite dependent on a "pack of women."

Jerry regarded the whole thing as a stupendous, successful enterprise, in which he himself was a prime factor. Indeed, John took him formally into partnership, and gravely consulted him on all matters pertaining to the business.

The good Sherburn folks did not have new dresses every day in the week, & the Rosy found the intervals of waiting good customers rather discouraging, & so, once, many only had their dresses fly black silk!

them up at home, with perhaps a little help from her in the trimming and draping. This, of course, was not so profitable; but as the weeks wore away a little money came surely in, and she realized that it was a dependence in a small way, and promised well for the future.

Another good result of the experiment was that it gave her mind occupation, and filled many an hour pleasantly that would otherwise have been spent in restlessness and repining.

One bright afternoon, as Rosy and Hester sat sewing, they heard the jingling of sleigh-bells, and, looking out, saw Mrs. Saunders — “Aunt Polly Sarnders,” as wierybody called her — drive into the began She was bundled up so as to be and pret. recognizable, but, after much be some magf foot-warmers and wraps

and mufflers, and much rummaging under the seat for boxes and bundles, with a good deal of assistance from Jerry, she came finally waddling and puffing into the house.

Aunt Polly was the largest woman in town, — a literal mountain of fat, — and when divested of her outer wrappings, she looked like nothing so much as a huge *bolster*, with one string tied round where her neck and another where her waist should be!

“I’ve come over, Rosy,” she said, laughing and chuckling good-naturedly, “ter git you ter make up my new black silk. It’s ben layin’ in the draw’ goin’ on three year, and when I heerd the minister’s wife settin’ out what a good hand you was at dresses, I says ter once, ‘I’ll go ’n’ git her ter dew my black silk!’

Yes," she continued, "I made up my mind ter hev it done; and father, he 'greed with me. 'It 'll be a-fallin' ter pieces,' says he, 'if it lays much longer!'" and she laughed again, till she shook like a mountain of jelly.

"I am so glad to make it, Aunt Polly!" said Rosy, delightedly, letting the silk fall in rich folds, and looking at it with sparkling eyes. "I will make it just as nice as I possibly can." Then she stopped suddenly, looked at Aunt Polly, and almost laughed aloud. "Oh, such a figure!" she groaned mentally.

"If it were only for *Hester*, now, what a pleasure it would be to make it!"

But, after all, dressmakers are not responsible for the figures of their customers; and, consoled by this reflection, she jumped up and ran for her tape-

measure, in order to begin upon it at once.

“You wouldn’t believe it,” Aunt Polly chuckled as Rosy walked round her with the tape-measure pulled out to its fullest extent, “but I’ve seen the day when your dresses would fit me loose.

“Now, look here !” she continued, earnestly, “I don’t want no furbelows, nor flounces, nor nothin’ o’ the kind. I jest want it made up real plain and common-sense, ye know.”

“That’s the right idea,” said Rosy, approvingly, “but I should like to make your skirt a little longer than this one ; can’t I ? ”

Aunt Polly put out one foot—displaying a neat shoe, with a few inches of blue woollen stocking above it.

“Wall,” she assented ; “but I wont

have no *trails* a-wipin' up the floors — it's a nasty, shif'less fashion ! ”

“ Oh, no ; it needn't touch,” said Rosy. “ but it might be — say, three inches — longer ? ”

“ All right, Rosy ; and make it plenty big in the waist and arm-sizes, so 's 't I sha'n't never bust out nowheres — that's so mortifyin' ! And you may as well turn the skirt down a good piece ter the top, seein' there's plenty o' silk. His second wife may be taller, ye know,” facetiously, beginning to laugh and shake once more.

Rosy promised to have it all satisfactory, and just then Aunt Nancy came into the room.

“ Now, Mis' Sarnders,” she said, hospitably, “ you're jest a-goin' ter stay ter tea ! We'll have it real early, so you'll

git home 'tween sundown and dark," and the girls added their entreaties.

"Wall, I declare, I hadn't thought o' sech a thing, and I dunno 's I'd ought tew!" said Aunt Polly, but she finally consented, and, seating herself comfortably in the big rocking-chair, whisked out her knitting-work and began to talk.

"She meant to stay all the time," laughed Rosy afterwards; "if not, how was it she happened to have her knitting-work along!"

Aunt Polly was what the Holler folks called "good company." She was naturally intelligent, and if she could have had the advantage of early education, she would no doubt have been a superior woman. As it was, she was very bright and entertaining in her homely way.

She had read considerable, and, not-

withstanding her enormous size, which one would naturally consider a serious drawback to locomotion, she had "been round" more than most of her neighbors. She had a daughter married and living in the city, "over the mountain," whom she often visited, staying weeks at a time, and always picking up much that was new and interesting to bring back and rehearse to her less fortunate neighbors at home.

Her daughter's only child was a girl of about Rosy's age, who had once or twice accompanied her mother in her visits to Sherburn, and excited great interest among the young people on account of her beauty, her fashionable dress, and city airs.

Rosy inquired for her now. "Is Juliet as pretty as ever, Aunt Polly?"

Aunt Polly's cheerful face clouded. "Yes, she's as pretty as ever, fur's I know," she answered, dubiously; "but Juliet Jones is in a bad way—I call it—for herself and all consarned. Her mother's worried most ter death about her, and her father,—wall, he's jest disgusted!—that's how Lyman is."

"Mis' Sarnders, dew for pity's sake tell us what Juliet Jones has gone and done!" exclaimed Aunt Nancy. "I dew hope it ain't nothin' ter disgrace her family!"

Aunt Polly shrugged her shoulders and laughed.

"No, no; nothin' o' that kind. But I declare I don't know exactly how ter tell ye what it is. I think's likely you've all heard tell, or read somethin' about these 'ere '*estheticks*'"—

"Oh, yes!" interrupted Aunt Nancy,

“they’re dretful! They wheeze anybody all up so ’s ’t they can’t breathe layin’ down. I wanter know if she’s got *them* fastened on tew her!”

“Oh, aunty!” said Rosy, laughing, “I guess you’re thinking of the word ‘*asthmatic*,’ — aren’t you?”

“Mebby I be,” allowed Aunt Nancy, — “words are so much alike. But go on, Mis’ Sarnders, and tell us — then we shall know.”

“Wall! as nigh ’s I can find out, they ’riginated down country, in Boston and round; though I presume they’re all over with there, long ago, but they’ve jest got ’em up here in the mountains, and that’s how Juliet happened to have ’em.”

“Why, then they’re ketchin’?” said Aunt Nancy.

Hester and Rosy exchanged glances. "We know what you mean now, Aunt Polly," said Hester. "Juliet is foolishly carried away about *art*—pictures and statuary and everything of that kind?"

"Yes, yes; that's it, only it is '*high art*' that she raves over. Goodness knows what that means—I don't!"

"But how does it seem to affect her?" asked Aunt Nancy. "What's the symptoms, as the doctors say?"

"I'll try and tell ye. In the fust place, she's gone ter work and made the hull house dismal and uncomfortable. It used ter be real pretty and cosey, inside and out. But Juliet, she's carried off all the rockin' chairs, and arm-chairs, and every other comfortable piece o' furnitoor, and put in a lot o' this straight-backed, '*high art*' stuff, that it makes your bones ache

jest ter look at, ter say nothin' o' settin' on it. Then she's took down all the doors, and hung curtins up where the doors orter be—"

Here Aunt Nancy held up both hands in amazement. "Curtins instid o' doors!" she exclaimed. "Massy sakes! what for?"

"For looks. It's one o' their high art notions, ye know. *She* don't call 'em curtins, though. She calls 'em '*portyairs*' or '*draperies*.' Nor she don't call curtins, *curtins*; she calls 'em *draperies*, and everything else that is made o' cloth and has any *hang* tew it."

"Oh, she doos? I s'pose she would call a *towel* a '*drapery*' then?" said Aunt Nancy, with sarcasm.

"Yes," Aunt Polly continued; "and she's lugged off all the picters that used ter hang on the walls, that her par and

mar set so much by,—a good many of 'em was weddin' presents, ye know. There was 'The Empty Sleeve,' 'The Old Arm Chair,' and a lot more—most on 'em was these chromeos. Wall, she's cleaned 'em all out, and hung up hern; copies of the 'old masters,' she says, and I shouldn't wonder if they was, for there ain't a single bright, cheerful-lookin' one in the lot! She's cluttered the mantletry shelves and tables all up with what she calls '*Bricky-brack*'—old cracked and broken dishes, and outlandish things of every description—the older they be the better she seems ter like 'em."

"She orter have the old sugar-bowl, girls," suggested Aunt Nancy.

"And the way she spends her time is a burnin' shame. She used ter be a great help and comfort tew her ma. She was

fond o' cookin' and workin' round in the kitchen, and she could trim a cap or a bun-nit as well as a perfeessional milliner. But now she lops round all day, with a book o' siliy poitry in her hand, or else she's a-paintin' old pots and jars, or playin' on the pianner.—And *sech* playin'; I took pains ter ask her the names o' the pieces, they was so lonesome and peculiar. She said they was 'fugues' and 'sonnarters' and 'simfonies.' She never played a good lively tune while I was there. I asked her if she couldn't play some o' the Moody and Sankey pieces. She give me an awful witherin', squelchin' look, and says she, 'I play only *classical* music, grandma.' I felt cheap, for I didn't know but what that was jest as 'classical' as any. But I spoke up tew her, and says I, 'I don't care! them Moody and Sankey

pieces have got some tune to 'em, and good, moral words, any way, classical or no classical!' The wust on't is the way she treats the young man that's keepin' company with her. He's a nice, stiddy young man, and her par and mar both think the world on him. She used tew, but she's changed. Not but what I think she really likes him, but she's taken ter snubbin' him, and *settin' down* on him, as you might say, lately; and I don't know jest how long a smart, high-sperited feller like him is a-goin' ter stan' it. He must be sick ter want to marry her now, any way, 'less she comes out o' these tantrums. She may lose him yet, if she don't look out, and I told her so."

"Oh la! I shouldn't worry about her," said Aunt Nancy, placidly. "Young girls are apt ter be flighty and full o' notions.

If it ain't about one thing it's another. She'll git over it in time." She looked at Rosy abstractedly, who blushed a little.

"And does Juliet *really* enjoy those things—the dreadful music and the poetry and broken dishes?" she asked. "I should think it would be very tiresome. Does she seem *happy*?"

"No, she don't," answered Aunt Polly, emphatically. "She wa'n't brought up ter sech things, and it don't come nateral nor handy tew her to like 'em. She jest thinks it's the proper thing ter dew,—she's got that idee fixed somehow,—and so she must dew it; but I know it galls her, and wears upon her, and I'll bet, if it wa'n't for her ambition, she'd give it all up ter-day. Why! Juliet Jones was cut out for a pretty, frisky little home body.

She can't be a scholar nor an artist, — it ain't in her !

“I'm the last one in the world to object ter anybody's workin' out what's *in* 'em, whuther it's paintin' or music or anything else; but when it *ain't* in 'em, all they can make of it is a poor miser'ble imitation — a sham ! And that's about what a good many folks amount tew now'days, — shams ! when if they'd try the thing nater fitted 'em for, they might be *real folks* and a success.”

That night when the two girls were going to bed, Rosy asked Hester what she made out of the account of Juliet's “craze.”

“Oh, I suppose it is true,” said Hester, “that there is a great deal of humbug about culture nowadays, and what is called ‘art culture’ in particular. I

don't think it is strange that girls with plenty of leisure and money, in the cities where such opportunities are offered, should be ambitious in that direction. And, in many cases, even if it does not develop any positive talent, it must be a great advantage — as with Miss Arbuckle. But evidently it is sometimes a silly and dangerous experiment.

“I should say — though I know very little about it — that Aunt Polly is right, and one's natural bent of mind should be the test of fitness for every pursuit. The cultivation of any real talent God has given us ought never to make us miserable or unworthy.”

“I hope and trust I am not too ambitious in cultivating my one humble talent for dressmaking,” said Rosy, laughing. “But do you know,” she added, “I feel

as if I were already fairly started, and if it were not for — for just *one thing*, I should be the happiest girl in town,” and she heaved a doleful sigh.

Hester said nothing — only smiled, and kissed her cheek. She felt that it was best to leave her to herself.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WOOD-PILE. — LOVE.

THE little family were now comparatively comfortable. They no longer feared the wolf at the door, and the cold winter had lost its prospective terrors. With roaring fires, plenty of nourishing food, and work enough for all, they began to “lift up their heads and feel *like* folks,” as Aunt Nancy expressed it.

That good woman had added not a little to the family income, by knitting warm woollen mittens for the farmers and their boys. She prided herself on this accomplishment, often declaring, when finishing up an extra nice pair, that they were “good enough for the Prince o’ *Whales*, if

she *did* knit 'em !” One pair, into which she put her choicest work, found its way every winter to the minister; and as a pair would stand two or three years' wear, in the course of time they accumulated to such an extent that he was wont to remark to his wife that he “ought to be ‘*four handed*’ (forehanded) if not *more*, to wear so many mittens !”

The long winter evenings passed very pleasantly. John usually read aloud an hour or two, as the family sat round the table busily at work. Among other books, he had been reading a history of the American Revolution, in which Jerry was much interested. It was one wild, stormy night — when the wind howled, and blew the snow in great drifts about the little old house — that they sat cosily by the kitchen fire, John reading from the his-

tory, the rest listening while they worked. He had arrived at the account of the fearful sufferings of the American soldiers during that last cold winter. How they endured long marches,—hungry, and clothed in rags,—their poor feet, frozen and torn, leaving bloody footprints behind them in the snow.

Jerry could not bear to hear it, and, dropping his head down on the table, he wept long and bitterly.

“I know something about it,” he sobbed, remembering his experience that day he went to mill. “I think the snow and cold are *terrible* and *cruel*! I don’t see what God made ’em for,”—shuddering as the noise of the tumult outside came for a moment to his ears.

“Pooh!” said John, lightly, “in some places it is winter all the time, you know,

and the people love it. In Lapland it is so, and they have jolly times riding on their sledges — and what do you think! when they go to church, they carry the babies and leave them outside, buried up in the snow to keep warm, with a dog to watch them!”

Jerry laughed. “How funny!” said he.

“John Ruggles!” said Aunt Nancy, looking at him severely over her spectacles, “perhaps you think it’s right ter divart and amuse a child with a pack o’ lies — but *I don’t!*”

“Oh, it’s true, every word of it,” said John, laughing. “I’ll show you where it tells about it in the book.” e’s as good

“Oh, wall, no matter — *I^f* calls us her if the book says so — by *Rosy*,” he added, deal ter swaller,” saic’

Rosy had been so busy with her sewing that she had not done much at sawing wood for some time, and, as Jerry remarked, "the job wasn't half finished."

It was one warm sunny day, soon after the storm, that Jerry came in, and, reminding her of the fact, coaxed her to go out and work with him awhile.

The exertion of sawing, and at the same time keeping up a running conversation with Jerry, gave Rosy's cheeks the color of a peony, and obliged her to stop pretty often to breathe and rest.

It was in one of these pauses that she was suddenly confronted by Will as the noise. She started as if she had seen for a moment; but, immediately regaining her self-possession, she jerked herself into a more lady-like posture and asked, coolly,

“Where did *you* come from?—out of the ground?”

“No,” said Will, “I just came to the house of an errand, and, hearing voices out here, I thought I’d come round.”

“Good weather for sawing wood,” remarked Rosy, in a business-like tone, taking up the saw as if about to resume her work.

Will came over and took the saw out of her hand.

“Oh, don’t!” said Rosy. “I need the exercise, and we like it—don’t we, Jerry?”

“Yes, indeed—I guess we do!” Jerry answered. “We’ve had packs of fun. I like to work with Rosy; she’s as good as a boy. Aunt Nancy calls us her two boys—me and Rosy,” he added, proudly.

Will began to saw gravely, without lifting his eyes to hers.

Jerry kept on splitting, and Rosy turned to go. Will looked up beseechingly. "Don't go, Rosy," he said. "It is warm here in the sun; sit down awhile and rest, wont you?"

She sat down and watched him at his work. "He is so strong!" she thought, admiringly. "It is only child's-play for him to saw wood." But she began to wish he would speak, or at least look at her.

"Will," she said, sharply, "you are getting that wood too long!"

He slipped the stick back and shortened the cut, but said nothing.

"Oh!" making another attempt, "do you know that I have gone into business?"

“Into the wood business?—sawing and splitting?”

“Well, yes,” laughing; “but into the dressmaking business, too. I’m making lots of money,” nodding her bright head emphatically.

“Yes, and you’ll probably wear yourself all out, and have another fever,” with a reproachful look of his handsome black eyes.

“Oh, no!” she answered, lightly. “This is altogether different from working in the mill.”

“Oh, I dare say,” turning to his work.

“Yes, and when I get tired sewing, and want a change, I can saw wood, you know.”

Will frowned. “Promise me that you will not saw any more wood,” he said.

“Oh, I couldn’t possibly do it,” with a little defiant toss of her head. “I always like to finish things I begin. But we may need some help — perhaps you would like a job?” watching him mischievously through her half-closed eyes.

“I think I shall *take* the job,” said he, his face flushing. “Jerry and I will finish the wood.”

“*Jerry and I will finish the wood; we will let you know if we want you,*” said Rosy, coolly, and, pulling on her hood, walked into the house without another word.

Will set his teeth and sawed for a few minutes as if his life depended on it. Jerry stopped loading the basket, and studied his friend’s face attentively.

“Will,” said he, “what’s the matter? Do you feel bad?”

“Yes, I do, little man,” answered Will, impulsively.

“Is it about Rosy?” asked Jerry. “She’s funny, ain’t she?” he continued, reflectively. “Now, when you’re here, she seems cross to you, just as if she didn’t like you; but when you ain’t here, she calls you ‘dear old Will,’ and says she —”

“What!” interrupted Will, drawing in his breath sharply, and picking Jerry up in his arms. “What did you say? Tell me again.”

“I said she calls you ‘dear old Will,’ and she does. — Don’t squeeze me so! — I heard her say it twice the other night, when she and Hester were talking. And she cried, too, and said how that she loved —”

“There, never mind, Jerry; that ’ll do,”

said Will, hastily. "Perhaps she'll tell me the rest herself sometime."

"I guess she will — sometime," said Jerry, encouragingly; "but I wouldn't ask her to-day — she is cross to you to-day. But she's never cross to me," he added, loyally.

"Jerry," said Will, abruptly, "what do you want most of anything in the world?"

The child laughed: "Oh, I want lots of things!"

"But what? — tell me what!"

"Oh, I want a top, and a cart, and a new story-book with lots of pictures in it."

"What else?"

Jerry grinned. "I guess that'll do," he said. "When I get *them*, mebbly I'll think of something more."

Will gave him a hasty kiss, and set

him down on his feet and went into the house.

“Have you got all the wood sawed?” asked Rosy, saucily, as he entered the little sitting-room, where she was sewing alone.

He went straight up to her, without a word, flung her work aside, and, with one swift, passionate movement, clasped both her hands in his, and drew her close, looking down into her lovely, half-frightened face, with a glance both masterful and fond. He dared not kiss her, but he bent his head till his lips touched her hair.

“Rosy, Rosy, tell me you love me — *tell me!*” he cried, half beseeching, half commanding.

She flushed hotly, but obeyed. “I do ! oh, I do !” she whispered; “I love you, but —”

“Rosy,” broke in Aunt Nancy, that moment heaving in sight, “I wish you’d go ’n’ jest smell o’ them emptin’s; *I* say they’re sour! I hain’t had no kind o’ luck with my riz bread lately, all on account o’ the emptin’s bein’ sp’ilt,” she grumbled.

Rosy fled to look after the “emptin’s,” and Will took his leave with a light heart, though not quite satisfied, remembering Rosy’s last word.

From that day, however, they were the best of friends. There was no more open love-making, but each understood, by the thousand little signs known only to those who love, that there was no need.

Hester looked on, well pleased, and Aunt Nancy gave in her opinion that “Rosy was goin’ ter settle down, and be a good, stiddy woman, after all.”

CHAPTER X.

THE CITY BOARDERS.

AND so the winter wore away in Sherburn Holler, its quiet monotony enlivened by no exciting events of any kind. No receptions, balls, or operas ; no lectures, church fairs, even, nor suppers. And yet their simple, innocent pleasures satisfied their needs.

There were sewing circles, quiltings, apple-bees, and spelling-matches, and an occasional surprise party. In the spring there were sugar parties, when the young people assembled in the evenings to boil the sap, and eat their fill of maple sugar.

And now the snows begin to melt upon the mountains, adding new thunders

to the cataracts. The little brooks, swollen almost to rivers, rush noisily through the meadows. The cattle in the barnyards rejoice in the warm sunshine, and salute each other with many a friendly bleat and bray. The fowls bestir themselves, scratching industriously about in the bare, soft spots for the poor worm, that, with the rest of the world, would fain creep out from its winter quarters.

The voice of the pewee and the robin are heard abroad in the land; and the ploughman hastens to prepare his fields for the sowing and the planting.

Peace and comfort and happiness have settled down upon the Ruggles family. Aunt Nancy has realized the fulfilment of her modest desires. Her rheumatism is nearly vanquished, and every afternoon she fairly crackles in her stiff-

starched white aprons, which Rosy bountifully supplies.

Jerry is the happy possessor of the promised treasures—the top, cart, and picture-book; and he will consider Will's word as good as the Bank of England, hereafter. He wears a pair of new trousers made out of the minister's; and a new jacket, abounding in pockets, hangs on a peg in the closet.

John, released from his long confinement, rejoices once more in his strength, and goes about his spring work with his head full of plans for improving the farm, and repairing the house the coming year. Indoors, they are house-cleaning and making ready for summer boarders. Miss Arbuckle had written to Hester saying that she should like to come a little earlier than usual, and

asking if she might bring her brother along with her.

“Being somewhat out of health,” she wrote, “his physician recommends mountain air; and as he is passionately fond of trout-fishing, I proposed that he should take a trip in the direction of Sherburn Holler, and stay with me awhile.

“I have given him such glowing accounts of your wonderful trout-brooks, and the beautiful scenery of your quiet little valley, that he is more than willing to come, provided you can accommodate him.”

They considered the subject carefully, and finally decided to let him come. The price of his board was a consideration which they could not afford to overlook.

Rosy pouted. She did not like the plan.

“I presume he is a dandy, and will make fun of us all,” she said.

The next day, at the dinner-table, Rosy was strangely absent-minded and silent. At the conclusion of the meal, she got up and ran round to where Aunt Nancy sat in her high-backed chair, and, leaning on her shoulder, began coaxingly: —

“Mamsey dear, you are the best and nicest old auntie in the world, as we all know — but if you only *would* try to be a little more *stylish*, now, just to please *me*! You know people don’t do everywhere exactly as we do here in the Holler. We’re a little bit old-fashioned, and I should hate to have those city folks that are coming laugh at us, and make fun of our gawky manners!”

Aunt Nancy looked round at her, smiling fondly.

“What crick have you got inter your head now, dear?” she said. “*Your* manners is well enough—fit for a queen, any day, and Hester’s tew. I know *I’m* old-fashioned; I’m afraid I should make gawmin’ work at these ere new-fangled ways. But nobody expects old folks ter be ginteel.”

“If you only *would* eat with your fork,” suggested Rosy.

Aunt Nancy took up the silver fork beside her plate, and looked at it grimly.

“Didn’t I tell ye,” she said, turning to Hester, “didn’t I tell ye, when Rosy sent these ere forks home, that *I* couldn’t never use one on ’em! It’s alwers laid side o’ my plate, faithful, but its only for show; *this* is the tool I depend on!” holding up a three tined steel fork. “Now,

this, for real sarvice, is wuth a cart-load o' them things!

“You ain't *reasonable*, Rosy,” she continued. “If you'd be contented ter lemme use it *for a fork*, mebbby I could larn ter dew that much, in time; but when ye come ter want me ter cut up my pie and eat beans and pertater with it, — why, I say it ain't in natur'! 'Taint no kind of a *fork*, in the fust place!” she added, contemptuously, “and 'taint a knife, and 'tain't a spoon — 'tain't *nothin'*!” Then she turned and patted the young girl's cheek and looked at her wistfully.

“I tell ye, Rosy, ‘it's hard larnin' old dogs new tricks.’ Let the young folks put on all the style they want, but don't bother your old aunty 'bout sech things. Not but what I'd dew it willin'ly,

ter please ye, if I could," she added, regretfully, "but I'm tew old and clumsy. 'Twouldn't be no use ter try."

Rosy turned away; "It's a great pity," said she, bitterly, "that Miss Arbuckle ever came here, with her fine city manners; and if she must come again, I do wish she would leave her brother at home!"

"Rosy," said Hester, "you know Miss Arbuckle never made fun of us. I'm sure she could not have treated us with more respect; and she seemed to love Aunt Nancy almost as much as we do. The old are not expected to fall in with all the ways of young people — indeed, it would be very foolish for them to try — they would appear ridiculous. Don't you think so?"

"Perhaps so," said Rosy, thoughtfully.

“It would be difficult to imagine Aunt Nancy any different from what she is, and I don’t know as I want her to be — dear old soul” — she added, remorsefully. “But, all the same, I do dread having that city fop come — for I know he *is* a fop!” she said, spitefully. “I should think he might find places enough *to fish*, without coming here !”

Hester laughed. “You are so unreasonable, Rosy! He won’t be here long, and think of the *money*!”

“I don’t know ; I begin to feel quite indifferent about money, nowadays,” and then she blushed furiously.

The city boarders came to Sherburn Holler in the month of June, and they found it at its best. Daisies and buttercups bordered the roadside. The meadows were fresh in their dress of velvety

green. The farmer's boy whistled merrily at his work, while the bobolink rollicked recklessly over his head, and the grand old hills, towering high on either hand, kept unwearied watch by night and day.

On the morning after their arrival, Miss Arbuckle and her brother were taking an early walk together. They sauntered along to the pasture bars, and Guy Arbuckle stopped there, leaning on his folded arms, while his sister sat down on a mossy stone, waiting upon his movements.

He looked about him, his eyes finally resting on the hills, with something of awe in his dissipated but handsome face.

"Annie," he said, "I wonder if this place strikes you as it does me? These hills seem to be looking on me with — with *disapproval*. I feel as if I'd been a

naughty boy, and my mother were grieved, you know."

Annie smiled, a little sadly. "It will do you good to be here," she said.

"But," he continued, whimsically, "isn't there any way to propitiate these solemn monitors — to make friends with them?"

Annie laughed outright. "Be a good boy," she answered lightly, falling in with his mood, "then they will be friendly."

"I should say it would be difficult to be anything else here," he said, with a shrug of the shoulders. "One must needs be good for lack of opportunity to be otherwise. Small credit in that, eh?"

"Why, no," said Annie; "when you are acquainted with these people, you will find they have many trials and temptations,

and their goodness and rectitude are not to be despised."

"Oh, I have no doubt," he answered, carelessly; "but I don't see how they dare to walk crooked, with those solemn old fellows watching all the time," with a nod towards the hills.

"I love the hills!" she said, earnestly. "To me they have seemed a protection—a sort of barrier between me and the world and its worries; and when I am at home in the city I often long for a sight of them. Oh, I love them!" her dark eyes glowing, her lips quivering with emotion.

Guy put his arm around her and drew her on. He was very fond of his sister, and they had many tastes and sympathies in common; but his dissipated habits and loose ideas of right and wrong were a source of great anxiety to Annie. She

hoped that the pure and simple atmosphere of Sherburn Holler might do him good, — soul, as well as body.

“I am indebted to you, Annie,” he said, after a moment’s silence, “for giving me a new sensation. As much as I have travelled, I never came upon a place like this,” still looking about him. “And the Ruggles family — it is unique — especially Rosy.”

“Is she not lovely ? I always think of her in connection with wild roses, and everything exquisitely fresh and natural ! And she is as good and affectionate as pretty.”

“What a pity she should waste her sweetness here !” said Guy, carelessly, snipping off the head of a daisy with his cane. “Couldn’t she be transplanted, somehow ?”

“Oh, I hope not!” said his sister. “She is part and parcel of this dear old spot — she belongs here. Besides,” laughing, “I presume she is already bound here, by that strongest of ties. Some honest heart has doubtless won my Rose.”

“Bah!” exclaimed Guy, with a grimace of disgust, “some country clown, I suppose! And she seems refined — remarkably so for her station, I should say.”

“Oh, yes; but there are some fine fellows among these farmers.”

Her brother yawned, and made no reply, and they dropped the subject.

CHAPTER XI.

SUNDAY IN THE HOLLER.

THE day following was Sunday. Guy Arbuckle had asked his sister if it was "to be any duller than a week-day, and, if so, how they were expected to kill the time?" She had only smiled and answered "You will see."

It had been this gentleman's custom at home to sleep until eight or nine o'clock on Sunday mornings, and he determined, in his own mind, that he would sleep much later here — in fact, that he would shorten the day at both ends, and, with an afternoon nap between, he hoped to worry through the rest somehow.

But it came to pass that he awoke

several hours earlier than he ever did before in his life. He awoke and opened his eyes wide, and listened and wondered. It was the morning concert of the birds, and he was hearing it for the first time! He thought he might be dreaming, and sat up and rubbed his eyes, while the performance still went on. The flute-like solos of the robins ended, and then the grand chorus began. A thousand little throats swelled the rapturous song, and thousands more took it up, until the whole world seemed full of music, and throbbing with ecstasy.

“Is it some miracle in nature, performed for my special benefit, to reprove me for my contempt of this place, which seems in truth to be her very sanctuary? or perhaps it is the custom of the birds in Sherburn Holler to welcome

strangers with a morning serenade !” This he muttered whimsically to himself as he sprang out of bed, and, throwing up a window, looked out upon the morning.

The dewy meadows and pastures seemed still wrapped in silent repose. The morning song of the birds was no new thing to them, that it should disturb their tranquil slumbers. For centuries they had sung as they did this morning, and not a dew-drop had sparkled in the meadows, not a lamb bleated on the hill-side, to give sign of hearing or caring. Not till the sun arose and kissed them, would they awake to life and sense.

The air from off the hills blew freshly in his face, and, throwing back his shoulders, he inhaled long delightful draughts. Still the birds sang on; chirp and whistle and roulade and trill, in one

grand harmony. He stood by the window and listened and mused, till, chilled to the marrow, he was forced to go back to bed. But he was too effectually aroused to sleep again at once. He lay a long time, thinking of various things,—of life—what it must be here in this pure, peaceful spot; how different from his own life, not always either pure or peaceful. A regret that was almost a pain filled his soul, and he vaguely resolved to make his future different. Thus it is that nature sometimes speaks to us more effectively than all the books or sermons.

As the grand chorus died away, he fell asleep, and awakened only when the big bell rang, that announced the half-hour before breakfast.

The breakfast consisted of baked beans and brown bread, as everybody knows.

What else should a respectable New England family have for a Sunday breakfast ! What else, indeed, except pie and coffee, which articles are perhaps almost as much a matter of course. Aunt Nancy always gave her family pie three times a day, in fact, if she “could get anything to make it of”; and she was wont to boast that she “could make a good pie out o’ most anything. Now,” she would say, “some folks think a dried-apple pie ain’t fit ter eat; but I tell ’em it’s all in the makin’. Anything is good if you *make* it good.”

Aunt Nancy always prepared the breakfast alone on Sunday morning, and then left the girls to wash the dishes and “clear up” afterwards. So now, as was her custom, she proceeded at once to the sitting-room, accompanied by Jerry.

Ever after her sister's death, Aunt Nancy considered the religious education of the children her special care. And since Jerry was old enough to go to Sunday-school, she had taken upon herself the task of "larnin' him his lesson." It must be confessed that she had found it no easy matter, as a general thing, and sometimes, she declared, he "did act like sin!"

But the minister had recently provided the children with simple lesson-books on the "Life and Character of Jesus," and for the first time Jerry was interested in his lessons and willing to study them.

The subject on this particular morning was Christ's death and crucifixion. Aunt Nancy opened the Bible and began to read in her business-like way, stopping to ask the questions and apply the text.

Jerry sat on a cricket at her feet and listened intently. It was all new to him — if he had ever heard it before, he was too young to understand its tragic meaning.

Aunt Nancy read on : “And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand, and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews ! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed and smote Him on the head —”

Here Jerry burst into loud sobs, and Aunt Nancy dropped her book in dismay.

“Jerry Ruggles !” she exclaimed, “what under the light o’ the sun ails ye ? I thought you was goin’ ter git yer lessons now, like a good boy. Stop that noise, and ’tend

ter me ! What are you cryin' for, any way, hey ? ”

“ Oh ! ” cried Jerry, dropping his head in her lap, “ I am so sorry for Jesus ! He was so good — and I love him so ! How mean and cruel they were to him ! Oh,” looking up with his little fists clinched, and his eyes flashing, “ I would just like to — *to kill 'em !* ”

“ Mercy on us ! Then you'd be a murderer, Jerry Ruggles ! Don't you know it's dretful wicked to kill ? There, now ! be a good boy, and 'tend ter the lesson. Jesus won't love ye if you act so.”

The good woman herself had heard the wondrous story till it ceased to move her, and she regarded Jerry's emotion at this time in the light of an unnecessary interruption.

But Jerry was not satisfied. “ Don't *you*

care, Aunt Nancy, because they treated Him so ?” he persisted, wonder and reproach in his face.

Aunt Nancy looked shocked. “That’s a pretty question ter ask your old aunty, and she a perfessor these thirty year !” she said, with dignity.

“But didn’t you ever feel bad enough to cry about it? You love Him, don’t you?”

Aunt Nancy was silent for a moment, and a troubled expression crept over her gentle face. “Yes, child, I do, I do,” she said, tremulously, “but I’ve read the story so many times—I s’pose that’s why it don’t affect me as it does you. And then,” she added, brightening, “I know that it is all over with, long ago—hundreds and hundreds of years. He is in glory now, at the right hand of the Father.”

Jerry drew in a long breath of relief and satisfaction, and gazed wistfully out at the cloudless morning sky. "I am so glad, so glad," he murmured, "for I do love Him."

"Well, dear," Aunt Nancy said, trying to speak steadily, "if you love Him and are a good child, some day you will go to Him."

"To Him, and to my mother?"

"Yes, yes ; to Him and to your mother." Then she took him on her lap and kissed him, and wiped away his tears and her own. And thus the lesson ended.

The village church, or the "meeting-house," stood on the main road, at the foot of "the mountain." It was a building of very unpretentious appearance, having neither steeple nor belfry. There

was no sounding-board over its high pulpit, although it was built at a time when they were considered almost indispensable. It had no vestry ; all the business meetings of the society, as well as the weekly prayer-meetings, being held in some school-house, or in the large hall over the store, which was used also for town purposes.

It was customary in the summer season to hold two services on the Sabbath, with only an hour's intermission, and therefore everybody who lived out of the immediate vicinity of the church carried a luncheon and remained till the close of the second service.

The old people ate their doughnuts and cheese or mince pie, cosily chatting together in the pews ; but the young men and maidens and the children be-

took themselves to the pleasant grove near by, where, in a quiet, subdued sort of way, they held delightful picnics.

Here each young man sought out the particular girl of his choice, and, if his courage were sufficient, he would sit beside her, offer some little attentions, hold her fan or parasol, and perhaps take her on a decorous stroll through the graveyard behind the meeting-house.

To this grove Aunt Nancy and Rosy repaired, accompanied by the city boarders, who in their different ways had greatly enjoyed the simplicity of the church service, and the restfulness of their surroundings.

To Annie Arbuckle the day seemed an ideal Sabbath of the Lord, a season of perfect rest, and her heart was full of praise and worship. But to Guy it was

only a novel experience — at best, a new sensation.

He lay a long time stretched out under the scented pines, thinking idly of the quaint and simple service, and the quainter congregation. He wondered vaguely if the great world was still throbbing and surging “over the mountain.” Could it be possible that a two-days journey out of all this rest and stillness would take him into the heart of a great city! Then he fell to munching cookies and watching Rosy Ruggles. How would she look clad in silks and laces, “draped” and “paniered” and “banged,” liked the city girls of his acquaintance? Somehow she pleased him as she was — surprising as it seemed when the fact occurred to him! Her face and figure needed no improvement

and her simple muslin dress and straw hat were all that could be desired in the way of adornment. Looking at her, he realized as never before the force of the saying "Beauty when unadorned is adorned the most."

He could not help thinking it a pity that such rare beauty should be given where there was evidently so little appreciation of it. And yet, "It is for the country folk the sweetest wild-flowers blow."

Around the church steps, and in the horse-sheds in the rear of the church, the farmers congregated to talk of crops, of bargains, news, and politics. They talked and whittled, and whittled and talked, till the hour for afternoon service arrived, when they gravely shut up their jack-knives, brushed the chips from their clothing, and went in to church.

Who shall say that all this social intercourse was less a means of grace to these people than the sermon and the prayer?

The ride home seemed but a fitting continuation of the service and worship of the day, so calm and quiet was the valley, so impressively solemn the aspect of the towering hills. Indeed, Guy Arbuckle was moved to remark, more in earnest than in jest, that "in such a place one could imagine what the 'perpetual Sabbath' would be like." And Annie bowed her head and softly smiled.

CHAPTER XII.

AN AFTERNOON VISIT.

ONE pleasant morning at the breakfast table, Rosy signified her intention of spending the afternoon with Uncle and Aunt Abel Davis as it was a long time since she had visited them. The city boarders immediately begged the privilege of accompanying her. To this Rosy finally consented, but she first exacted a promise that they should not—*even inside*—“make fun” of her dear old friends, or of anything they saw, assuring them that, whatever might be their outward defects, “their hearts were ‘pure gold’—that she loved them dearly, and everybody who knew them loved them.”

Her fears once allayed, she was really happy in the prospect of their company, and they set out in high spirits.

On their way thither, they passed through what was known as "the village." Here was the one store, and near by stood the "tarvern," with the appropriate if somewhat pretentious name "Trout Tavern" painted on its front. For there were trout brooks in all directions. One could not pass the place at any time of day, during the trout season, without meeting men or boys carrying great strings of the speckled beauties. They often sold them, and at good prices, too, to the travellers passing through on the stage. The coming of the stage once a day was considered a great event, and, except in the most hurrying times of the year, there was always quite a little

crowd about the steps of the tavern, to greet its arrival. It came back and forth "over the mountain" and brought and carried away with it all of the great city that some of the Sherburn folk ever saw.

The driver was a very important personage, indeed, and held about as many offices as the "Lord High Executioner of Titipu." He was postman, expressman, newsman, arbiter — autocrat, all in one; and the pompous flourish and crack of his great whip filled the small boys with unspeakable pride and delight.

The store and post-office were one. The tavern-keeper's wife — Mis' Beeman — had charge of the latter department. She had grown old in the service, — so old, indeed, that it was with difficulty she could make out the superscriptions

on the letters, and as for the “new-fangled” postal cards, tempting and fascinating as they were, she found it a laborious task to go through with them all nowadays, even with the aid of her best spectacles! But it never occurred to the Sherburn folks that they needed a new postmistress — they would as soon have thought of having a new minister!

The store itself was run in a loose, shiftless kind of way. All supplies were brought from “over the mountain,” and oftener than otherwise it happened that when one wanted a few pounds of sugar or a barrel of flour in a hurry they were “jest eout, and thinkin’ o’ goin’ ‘over’ to-morrer.” Fortunately, the neighbors were kind and obliging, and borrowing was always in order in Sherburn.

But all this is a digression. We left

Rosy in company with the city boarders, on their way to Uncle Abel's to spend the afternoon.

The Davis farm was away up in the "Furder deestrick," so called because it was at the further end of the town. As we have said, it was a hill-farm, and instead of the meadow lands in the "Holler," one saw here only steep pastures or wooded hillsides. But the soil was fertile and under good cultivation, so that it was not uncommon to see a corn-field waving on the summit of a high hill, while sheep and cows found luxuriant pasturage below.

The road that led up to the house seemed to wind round and round the mountain, and when at last they did come upon the little place, it was so suddenly, and with such an abrupt turn

about, that Mr. Arbuckle remarked that it "must be the end of the road."

When they drove into the door-yard, Aunt Abel came hospitably out to meet them. She was a plump little old lady, with rosy cheeks, and eyes still bright. Her hair—well, it must be confessed, she wore what they called a "false front"—but, at all events, she looked fifty, and was seventy.

She seemed a little flustered, and apologized for her husband's absence. "If he'd only knowed you's comin' he'd been here to take care o' the horse and so on."

Rosy assured her she could do perfectly well without him, and proceeded to hitch the horse to the fence. Then they were ushered into the little parlor, which seemed rather stuffy, coming in from the fresh mountain air; it was dark

as night, too, till the green paper curtains were rolled up, which Rosy assisted very dexterously in doing.

“Aunt Abel,” she announced, “we have come to spend the afternoon and take tea with you, and you must make as little work for us as possible, and let me help you get tea.”

“Land sakes !” said the good lady, “you’re welcome as can be, any time, and all you bring with you, — if you’ll put up with sech as I have.”

Then she apologized again, for the dust on the furniture, for the imaginary disorder of the room, where the chairs stood in a proper row, and everything had the appearance of having fairly *grown* into its place.

“Oh, the room is nice as can be, but just look outdoors !” cried Rosy. “Miss

Arbuckle — Mr. Arbuckle, see !” She threw open the window and pointed out over the valley below.

“Oh, Guy !” exclaimed Annie, “does it not remind you of the Valley of the Lauterbrunnen?”

“It does ! it does, indeed !” he answered with enthusiasm. “You have one of the finest views in the world ; you may well be proud of it,” he remarked, turning to Aunt Abel.

“Oh, I dunno ; I don’t mind much about it,” she said. “I’ve alwers lived right here, and of course things look kinder good and nateral to me. I s’pose like enough it is a pretty sight, or less strangers wouldn’t make sech a fuss over it. It looks best in June, for then the medders are greenest. Them medders yield a noble crop o’ hay.”

She showed them the family album—the pictures of the children she had buried long ago. They looked pathetically like their parents, and Miss Arbuckle felt a pang of sympathy, realizing instinctively what these children must have been to the lonely woman, away up here in her lonely mountain home.

She called their attention to two framed wreaths, hanging on the wall. They were long since colorless, withered, and unsightly. They were taken from her children's coffins. In the centre of each was a silver coffin-plate, bearing the name and age of the deceased. They hung on either side of a mourning-piece, done in crewel—also faded and colorless—sacred to the memory of their grandmother. On the opposite side of the room was a large, showy chromo, in a gilt frame. She

turned to this with pride glowing in every feature of her face.

“This picture,” she began, with the manner of one who had often repeated the words, “this picture is one my sister ‘over the mountain’ sent me. It is a picture of Vēnice — a city in Italy. My sister knows all about it. She says they don’t have any roads there at all — nothin’ but water everywhere, and they go in boats from house to house and from place to place, as you see in the picture. It must be a curious place ! It’s considered by all odds the nicest picture in Sherburn ; everybody comes to see it. *It cost seven dollars, frame and all !*”

Her visitors listened with close attention, and agreed with her that Venice was a curious place. When Annie told her she and her brother had been

there, and gave her more definite information as to the beauties and peculiarities of the city, Aunt Abel was delighted, and asked a great many questions. Presently, it occurred to her that it was getting on towards supper-time, and she and Rosy proceeded to the kitchen.

The other two, expressing a desire to go out and look around a little, followed. They were glad to escape from the parlor. "Strange," thought Annie, "that people living in the midst of so much natural beauty should be so destitute of all sense of beauty in the adornment of their homes! It would seem as if the artistic sense must be instinctive here." As they passed through the great kitchen, the brother and sister experienced a feeling of delicious relief and surprise. They smiled and exchanged glances of

mutual appreciation. After that glimpse of the kitchen, nothing should induce them to sit down again in the parlor! The room was long, and low, and wide. The floor was scrubbed daintily clean and white. The small-paned windows were fringed outside with scarlet runners, that hung in vivid clusters. The paint in the room — that is, the ceilings and doors — was a dull yellow. A huge fire-place was on one side of the room, and between its shining andirons, on the floor, stood a monstrous bunch of the feathery asparagus. “Sparrowgrass was good for drawin’ flies,” Aunt Abel explained. A wide, old-fashioned settee, with rockers, occupied the corner opposite, and a dresser with open shelves full of blue crockery and some odd pieces of silver, pewter, and britannia ware was a delight to

the eyes. A tall old clock ticked solemnly in another corner, a round-faced moon revolving on top, to tell the story of its own phases, and a painted ship, the changes of the tides.

The cooking stove was the only modern, incongruous object in the room, and even it did not seriously mar the quaint, quiet aspect of the place.

In that kitchen, and with that view from the windows, Turner himself need not have complained of his surroundings.

Opening from the kitchen was the "shed-room"—not the wood-shed—that was farther on. In the centre of this room was a huge wooden trough, and into it a little stream of water trickled ceaselessly, with a cool, pleasant sound. Thus was the water supplied for family

use the year round, and this great trough was the family water-pail.

At one end, on the cool north side, the milk-room was partitioned off, where on the shelves the pans of milk were ranged in shining rows. The great cheeses, too, were kept here, and the preserves, and stores of maple-sugar and honey.*

Uncle Abel opportunely puts in his appearance just as the supper is ready. He gives Rosy a hearty welcome, takes the strangers' hands in a strong grip, and says, "I hope to see ye well," which is considered the correct acknowledgment of an introduction in the "Holler," and, after a few words more of civility on both sides, they walk out to tea.

* The furnishings and arrangements herein described are common to most New England farm-houses in obscure towns, and may be found in "Sherburn Holler" to-day.

Aunt Abel again has recourse to apologies. "I'm awful sorry the best room is so small!" she said; "I would 'a' sot the table in there. I don't s'pose city folks are used to eatin' on bare floors!"

Rosy laughed, and, looking at the spotless floor, answered literally, "I'm sure it's nice and clean enough to eat on."

The city folks were glad the best room was small; if it had been smaller, there would still be enough of it, in their opinion, but they did not say so — they only politely expressed their pleasure at supping in her pleasant kitchen. Then she was sorry the table was so small — and it *was* small, so small that kind Uncle Abel, in order to give everybody else plenty of room, transfixed himself on one of its sharp corners, with the point sticking into his stomach quite uncomfortably. He

did make a ludicrous appearance, as he dexterously plied his knife and fork. Every article of food that he *could* cut, he cut, holding it down well with his fork, and slashing it across with great precision, carrying it to his mouth on his knife blade, and washing down the whole with numerous saucers of scalding tea.

Everything on the table, from the light biscuit to the plum sauce and sponge cake, was perfect, but each in its turn was lamented over and apologized for by the hostess, and proportionally praised by the visitors.

When Uncle Abel served the honey, he glanced roguishly at his wife and observed, "If there's anything the matter with this ere honey, Aunt Abel ain't to blame. The bees made it."

The repast ended, Uncle Abel tilted

back in his chair and wiped his mouth on the back of his hand.

“Wall, Mr. Arbuckle,” he said, jocosely, “I hope you’ve made out a supper.”

“I have, indeed !” answered Guy, heartily. “I never enjoyed a meal more in my life !”

The old man looked from one to the other of his guests, and moved uneasily in his seat.

“We’re rough in our ways up here — pretty rough, I s’pose, but we mean well. I used ter think,” he continued, wistfully, “I used ter think sometimes, when I was a young man, that I’d like ter sell the farm and go away and git edication, and so on, but it wa’n’t to be — no, it wa’n’t to be; and I think’s like enough the Lord knew best.”

The young man of the world looked at him thoughtfully. "After all, the difference between people here is only a matter of circumstance and opportunity, and in the hereafter the real advantage may be on this old man's side."

He changed the conversation to more cheerful topics, by asking about his experience in hunting bears. On this subject Uncle Abel was eloquent.

"I have lived here on the mountain all my life," he said, "and man and boy I have ketched — that is, trapped, shot, and knocked in the head, forty-odd bears. Got the bounty on 'em, too," he chuckled. "The last one was a noble great feller — weighed four hundred pound ! They had it in all the papers, and my name along with it. You must 'a' seen the piece."

He brought out several fine skins and spread them on the floor, among them that of the mammoth four-hundred-pounder. It was indeed magnificent and worth a good deal of money, as Guy remarked.

"Yes, they fetch a good price," said Uncle Abel, "and I orter dispose of 'em, 'fore the moths eat 'em up, but," with a furtive glance at his wife, "I hain't had no heart ter 'cumulate property sence the children was took away."

"Tell me how you managed to catch this great fellow?" said Guy. "I don't know much about bear-hunting."

"Why, you see, we sot the trap as usual, and when we went ter look arter it, the hull thing was gone. We followed the trail (there'd been a light snow the night afore) and arter trampin' a couple

o' mile we come upon him. He was jest ketched by one leg, and it didn't seem ter hender him much. He was makin' off about as fast as if he'd had four free legs to go on. When we come up with him, and he see us, he was antic, I tell ye! We had quite a tussle with him, — or *I* did — for there was only two boys along with me. I knocked him in the head a number o' times with my axe, and finally finished him. He was a tough one, though! He tore my coat all ter pieces, but I never got a scratch."

He invited Mr. Arbuckle to join him in a squirrel-hunt the next week, which he readily consented to do. As they had a long ride before them, they soon started for home, carrying away with them impressions that would be unique, as well as salutary and lasting.

CHAPTER XIII.

A RICH LOVER. — GLAMOUR.

THE lovely summer days slipped by, and still Guy Arbuckle lingered at the Ruggles farm.

It was true, the brooks furnished inexhaustible resources as to fishing ; small game abounded in the neighborhood, and he had even joined Uncle Abel in a bear-hunt, and actually caught sight of a live bear upon the mountains ; but somehow these sports began to pall upon him. Rosy Ruggles' charming face and delightful piquant ways interested him infinitely more. He finally gave himself up without reserve to the enjoyment of

her society, and the new spell of goodness, beauty, and innocence combined. He haunted the girl's steps, studied her tastes, and read her pure soul — or thought he did — like an open book ; but there were sacred pages sealed and closed from his sight.

He began to look back upon the dissipation and the hollowness of his past life with loathing, and to long, or imagine that he longed, for something better. He felt that his acquaintance with Rosy had opened up for him a new life, full of new possibilities. He finally concluded to open his heart to his sister.

They were sitting together alone one day, beside the brook, under the shadow of a big birch-tree ; his fishing-rod lying idly beside him on the grass, the speckled trout sporting and frisking unheeded be-

fore his very eyes. Was ever a fisherman so indifferent?

“Annie,” he began abruptly, “I believe I will marry Rosy Ruggles, and settle down for life.”

She turned a swift, startled look upon him. “Don’t joke about *her*, Guy,” she said, in a tone of disapproval.

“I am not joking. I tell you I mean to marry Rosy Ruggles,” he repeated, with an earnestness not to be mistaken.

“It seems strange to you — sudden, no doubt — and ours has been a short acquaintance; but, bless her innocent heart, it does not take long to know her! She is as fresh and unconventional as a daisy! She has plenty of spirit, though — in short, I believe she is just the sort of woman to make a man of me.”

His sister looked at him, and her eyes

filled with tears. "Poor fellow!" she thought, "he does need some one to make a man of him."

"Guy," she said, "if you are really in earnest, I am glad, and bid you God-speed."

He drew a sigh of relief. "I did not know but you might think it unsuitable; I hesitated myself, for some time. The family is so obscure and poor —"

She interrupted him with a gesture of protest. "It is a noble family," she said, "in every way worthy. And either of the girls would adorn any station in life. But can you have Rosy for the asking? Does she care for you?"

Guy laughed securely. "What do you think? Do rich husbands grow on every bush here in Sherburn Holler?"

"But Rosy is so unworldly."

"True, but she is ambitious."

One afternoon they were all out under the big apple-tree in front of the house. Guy lay at full length on the grass, lazily enjoying the shade, and watching Rosy, who was shelling a big panful of peas for dinner. She looked dainty and cool in her fresh print dress, and nothing could surpass the exquisite beauty of her face, framed in the bright gold of her hair. So Guy Arbuckle thought, as he languidly regarded her through his half-closed eyes.

By and by Hester is called into the house, and Miss Arbuckle follows, leaving Rosy alone with her brother.

“Rosy !” very softly. No answer. She is absorbed in her work, and the peas rattle into the pan. “*Rosy !*” a little sharply.

She starts nervously. “Oh ! what is it, Mr. Arbuckle ? Has a bug crawled up

your sleeve again — or a spider, perhaps ? I believe you hate them equally. Strange that you can bait a hook with a horrid squirming worm, when you are so afraid of bugs and spiders !”

“Rosy,” he repeated, utterly ignoring her remarks, “do you remember what we talked about, the other night, coming home from the falls?”

“If I remember rightly, bugs and spiders weren’t mentioned,” she said, demurely.

“Bugs and spiders be hanged ! Who cares anything about *bugs* and *spiders* !” he exclaimed impatiently.

“Now you ask me,” answered Rosy, “I don’t suppose *anybody* really *cares* for them ; but it seems foolish to hate them — poor creatures !”

“Rosy! do you know I believe you are

a born coquette ! It must be natural to you, since you have had small opportunity for acquiring the accomplishment, I should say. I flatter myself I understand women pretty well, but in some respects you are a riddle to me."

Rosy laughed. "Do you give it up ?" she asked, saucily.

"No. Do you remember what we talked about the other night ! Tell me !" he persisted.

"Let me see," said Rosy, casting up her eyes meditatively. "It must have been something very nice, since you are so particular to recall it.

"Oh ! didn't you say my hat was very becoming—the one trimmed with lavender ribbon and violets, you know. It *is* pretty. I trimmed it myself."

"Well," laughing, but vexed, "you

are progressing a little. What else did I say ?”

“You said,” turning upon him suddenly a changed, serious face, “you said that Sherburn Holler had done you good—that these dear old hills had been missionaries to your soul, and that you meant to be a better man hereafter.”

“Yes! and that *you* had been a good angel to me—as you will always be!” he added impetuously, rising and coming over to her side.

“I am glad if your stay with us has proved a benefit,” she said, simply. “You certainly do seem much better in health, and good health is next to religion, you know,” smiling.

“And love is better than all! Is it possible you do not know how I love you? What is the use of dissembling!”

"Dissembling!" echoed Rosy, starting up in a great hurry, and spilling her peas.

He gave the pan a vicious kick, and frowned down upon her, as she knelt to pick them up.

"Mr. Arbuckle," she suggested, "wouldn't it be a good plan to begin *now* to be good, by trying to control that temper of yours?"

He bit his lip and laughed nervously. "I know I am making a fool of myself, but you are so provoking."

Rosy took her pan and started for the house.

"Don't go!" he cried, almost angrily. "See here, Rosy, aren't you carrying rather a high hand with me—under the circumstances?"

"*'High hand! Circumstances!'* I

don't understand," said Rosy, turning short about and facing him.

"Why, you know I love you," he began, "and one would think—that is—generally—" he floundered hopelessly.

"*'Generally'* poor little country girls are only too glad to win the regard of rich and handsome city gentlemen!" finished Rosy, her beautiful eyes flashing scornfully.

"Just so," said he, coolly. "And if I did not know you to be as good and honest as you are charming, I should almost suspect you of acting a part. Rosy! you know I love you—I want you to be my wife."

"*Your wife!*" She repeated the words slowly, as if trying to comprehend their meaning.

"Yes, my wife," said Guy, proudly.

“Do you know all that means? It means wealth, and a life of luxury and ease. It means silks and satins and jewels — to match your beauty, dear — and love and worship, besides!”

His face was all aglow. He trembled, and the hand that clasped hers was so cold that she thought he must be ill. “Do not excite yourself so, Mr. Arbuckle,” she said kindly, but drawing away from him.

Then into her mind like a flash came the remembrance of all her longings for wealth and position. Here they were, laid at her feet! Her heart gave one great throb of triumph. For one moment she forgot love — Will Hanson — everything.

He took her silence for consent. “Tell me,” he said, “is this my little

wife ? ” He drew her to him, and would have kissed her.

His touch awoke her from her dream. She freed herself instantly from his embrace.

“ Oh, you must not kiss me — you must not ! ” she cried.

“ Well, what must I do ? ” he asked, enchanted with what he considered her divine simplicity.

“ Wait, and let me think ! ” she said, and ran past him into the house.

Aunt Nancy did not like Guy Arbuckle, and she had looked upon his growing interest in Rosy with strong disapproval.

“ I don’t care,” she said to Hester, “ I don’t care if he has got all the wealth of the ‘ Injins ’ (Indies) — I’d ruther have Will Hanson than forty like him ! He

ain't *genniwin*. His likin' for Rosy ain't nothin' but a notion, and he'll forgit all about her when he goes back to the city! You mark my words, now!"

Hester looked a little troubled. "I hope no harm will come of it," she said. "I see nothing in Rosy's behavior to find fault with, so far; and as for Mr. Arbuckle, he is a man of the world, and a gentleman, and will probably do nothing foolish or hasty."

"I ain't so sure he's a gentleman," said Aunt Nancy. "I know he's a man o' the world; and that's why I don't like him, nor trust him, nuther. I believe he means ter make love ter Rosy, and then go off and leave her, like a *raskil*!"

Hester smiled. "I don't think Rosy would break her heart over him, in any case. She don't seem to care for him."

“ Perhaps she don’t ; but you know how she’s alwers wanted ter be rich, and I’m afeared her pesky pride and ambition ’ll play the mischief with her.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE END.

MR. ARBUCKLE would not have felt flattered, if he could have known how the news was received, when Rosy told the family that he had asked her to marry him.

Aunt Nancy did not hesitate to express her dissatisfaction in the strongest terms; and when she appealed to her sister, Hester took her in her arms, and kissed her with the tears in her eyes.

“Look into your own heart, dear, and decide for yourself,” she said, tremulously. “And oh, my darling, be true to yourself!”

Rosy began to realize that it might not be such a fine thing, after all, to marry a rich man; even the silks and jewels appeared less and less desirable.

Meanwhile, Guy Arbuckle had no misgivings as to the final result of his wooing. He already regarded Rosy with a feeling of possession, and waited patiently upon her moods, as he could not have done had he understood the real state of the case. He noticed that she seemed disturbed, and not altogether happy, but he considered this only natural; as an offer of marriage from one like him to a girl in her position must, indeed, be a matter of great and serious importance.

A few days later, thinking that he had given her sufficient time for reflection, he again recurred to the subject.

“Well, Rosy,” said he, lightly, smiling

down into her eyes, "have I waited long enough for my answer?"

"Yes; and I have thought it over a great deal," she answered with an effort. "Do you know, Mr. Arbuckle, you did not ask me if I *loved* you—I noticed that."

"But you *do* love me?"

"No—oh, no! I don't—I can't; for I love somebody else with my whole soul!" she cried, clasping her hands tightly together.

"Ah? And how long have you loved—this fortunate '*somebody*'?" he asked, with a sneer.

"Oh, always! That is, a good many years. But, you see, I did not tell you at first, as I ought, because I knew you were rich, and I thought, if I married you, I could do so much for the family! And

then, I do love beautiful things — I *should* like those !” regretfully.

“Faust and Marguerite,” muttered Guy, under his breath.

“I am sorry I did not speak out frankly before,” she said, timidly, “and I *do* hope you will not be much disappointed.”

He could not help smiling at her simplicity.

“I don’t think I should have made you a suitable wife — I don’t, indeed,” she continued. “You would soon have tired of me, and I — oh, I should have been unhappy, miserable !”

He did not speak, and she went on hurriedly. “I do thank you, and I feel honored — oh, greatly honored, and I cannot tell you how it pains me to — to —”

“*Refuse* me,” he suggested, his glitter-

ing eyes fixed upon her in a cold, sarcastic gaze.

“Yes,” she assented simply, without looking up. “But I know you will soon forget me, and find some one much more suitable. Do you not think so?” lifting her hot face beseechingly to his.

She met a glance so cruel and angry that she felt almost frightened. The tears came into her lovely eyes. “Why should you be so displeased with me,” she pleaded. “I did not mean to do wrong — believe me.”

Her beauty and her innocent grief touched his heart.

“No, no, child!” he said, his face clearing; “you have done no wrong, except in making a serious matter of some little romance between yourself and some country bumpkin hereabouts. Dry your

tears, sweetheart, and give me a kiss. What a tender conscience we have, to be sure ! ”

But she only looked at him seriously, and shook her golden head.

“ Oh, I am in earnest ; I do not love you.”

“ Whom *do* you love ? ” he asked imperiously.

“ You have no right to ask me — *so* ; but I am proud to tell you. *I love Will Hanson !* ” She threw back her head and drew herself up with childish dignity. Guy Arbuckle burst into a loud laugh.

“ Why do you laugh ? ” she asked, a dangerous flash in her eye.

“ Laugh ? At the idea of it ! So *he* is *my rival !* ” and he laughed again.

“ *He* is your rival,” she repeated, her temper rising.

“You are not the girl I took you for,” he said at length, “if you go and throw yourself away upon a *country boor*! I thought you had some ambition — some taste!” with an expression of disgust in his face, that caused her to lose what little self-possession remained to her.

“And *you* are not the *gentleman* I took *you* for!” she exclaimed.

“Will Hanson is vastly — *infinitely* your superior, if you only knew it! Yes, even in *appearance* — in his shirt-sleeves and old blue overalls, he is the handsomest fellow in the world! And he is truly good and polite — a *gentleman* in every sense of the word. Why, *you* are not even *outwardly civil*! See how you treat me! A gentleman may forget his *manners*, but he never forgets to be *manly*!”

“Well, are you quite finished?” he asked. “You have a sharp tongue, have you not?”

“It may be,” she said. “A woman’s tongue is her weapon of defence, you know. But I seldom find occasion to use mine as I have to-day.” She rose, as she spoke, to leave the room, but at the door turned.

“Sir,” she said, with an effort, “I ask you to forgive me if I have wounded your feelings, — and I wish you well.” Then she went out and left him alone.

That afternoon, as Jerry was out in the yard at play, Will Hanson came along on his way to the village, and stopped, as he often did, to have a little chat and frolic with him.

“Oh, Will!” cried Jerry, running up to him excitedly, “Rosy is going to

marry Mr. Arbuckle, and she is going to the city to live in a splendid house with fourteen marble steps up to it,—and black servants to wait on her, and diamonds and carriages, and — and *everything* !” growing incoherent. “ Oh, and he’s going to send John to college, and give me a carriage and two *live goats* to draw it ! He said so ! ”

“ What *do* you mean ? ” exclaimed Will, clutching hold of Jerry, and giving him a little shake. “ Is Rosy going to marry Mr. Arbuckle ? Is that what you said ? ”

“ Yes, it is ! — You let me be ! ” whimpered Jerry, frightened by Will’s strange looks. “ But,” he continued, willing to propitiate him, “ Aunt Nancy don’t like it a bit, and she said she should consider it her *dooty* to tell you so —

though I don't see what difference *that'll* make," he added, philosophically.

"When did this happen? How long have you known it?"

"Oh, a few days ago — last week, I guess. I've heard a lot of talk about it."

Will turned slowly about, and walked away. He had been in a state of nervous apprehension ever since Mr. Arbuckle came, fearing just what had come to pass, and he did not for one moment doubt the truth of Jerry's story. He had been at the house considerably of late; had hunted and fished with Mr. Arbuckle and John, often stopping to tea, or picnicking with the family under the orchard trees. Consequently, he had seen them together a good deal; but he thought — indeed, he had felt quite sure — that, how-

ever much Mr. Arbuckle might admire Rosy, she was indifferent to him.

Still, he feared — knowing her ambition to be rich, and remembering her flushed and eager look that afternoon at the falls, when she spoke of what wealth would bring.

He groaned aloud as he went staggering along, he knew not, cared not whither, till the loud roaring of the falls near by recalled him to his senses. Obeying a sudden vague impulse, he climbed the fence, and took the direction of the old birch-tree — *her* tree. He went stumbling on, his eyes fixed upon the ground, his hands clasped behind him, knowing nothing, seeing nothing, — when suddenly his ear caught the sound of a sob. He looked up, and there before him, under the big birch-tree, lay Rosy

Ruggles, crying as if her heart would break !

He had never seen her so, and he loved her. Forgetting everything, he sprang to her side and lifted her in his arms.

“Rosy, darling, what is it ? tell me !” he said, brushing back the tangled gold of her hair from her lovely face, all hot and wet with tears.

She started, frightened, at first, then, with one glance into his face, she clung to him nervously, as if for protection from some lurking foe.

As her sobs subsided, the remembrance of his own distress and misery came back to his mind.

“Rosy, do promised brides generally have occasion for such tears as these ?” he asked, bitterly.

“I’m sure I don’t know,” answered

Rosy, hysterically, drawing away from him. "I never was a 'promised bride,' so I can't tell!"

"Rosy!" sternly, "Jerry told me all about it!"

"Well, if he told you all about it," she cried miserably, "what is the use of your coming here and asking questions — and plaguing me, when I am all tired out and just as unhappy as I can be!"

"Only tell me one thing: Are you going to marry Mr. Arbuckle? Is it true?"

"Oh, no, *no!* *You* ought to know I could not!"

He put out his arms and took her to his heart. "Rosy, is it because *you love me*, that you could not — that you will not marry Mr. Arbuckle?"

She lifted her wet eyes to his, but answered not a word. Then he took cour-

age, and, bending over, kissed her lips for the first time.

Thus love triumphed over ambition, and in the autumn, when the golden-rod and asters were in blossom, there was a double wedding at the Ruggles homestead.

Doctor Richard Bemis took his bride away over the mountain, to live in the great city, and John and Jerry went with them.

John is in the doctor's office, and hopes one day to write M. D. after his own name.

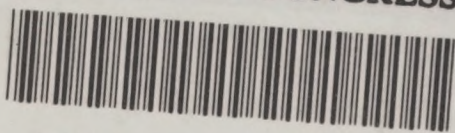
Jerry is at school, and bids fair to become an honor to the family.

Aunt Nancy lives with Rosy and Will, and never lacks for a clean white apron, nor a doctor to her "rheumatiz."

They have remodelled the old house,

and beautified the place, till it is scarcely recognizable. But the dear old hills remain the same, and "Sherburn Holler" still sleeps on in tranquil beauty.

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